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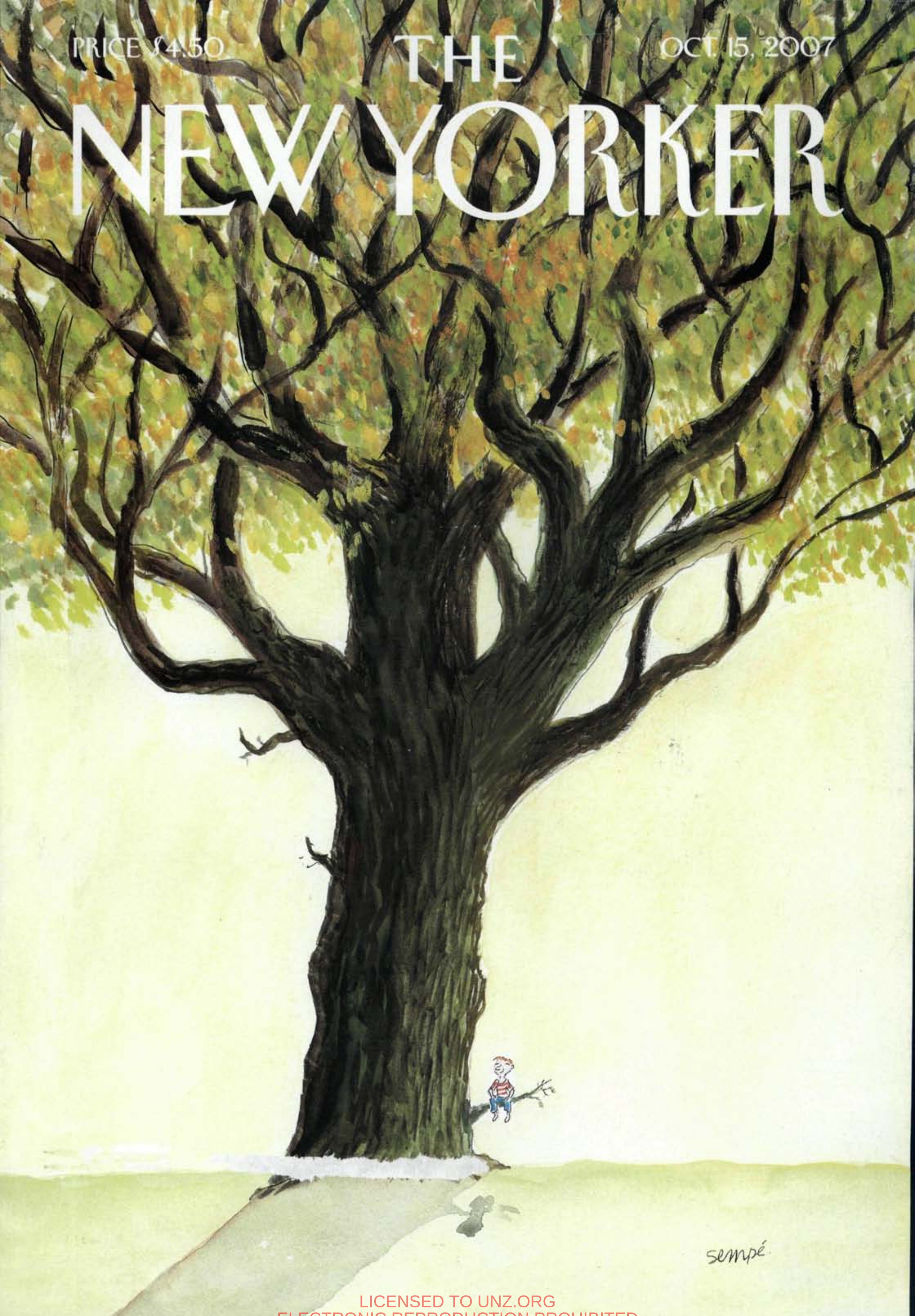

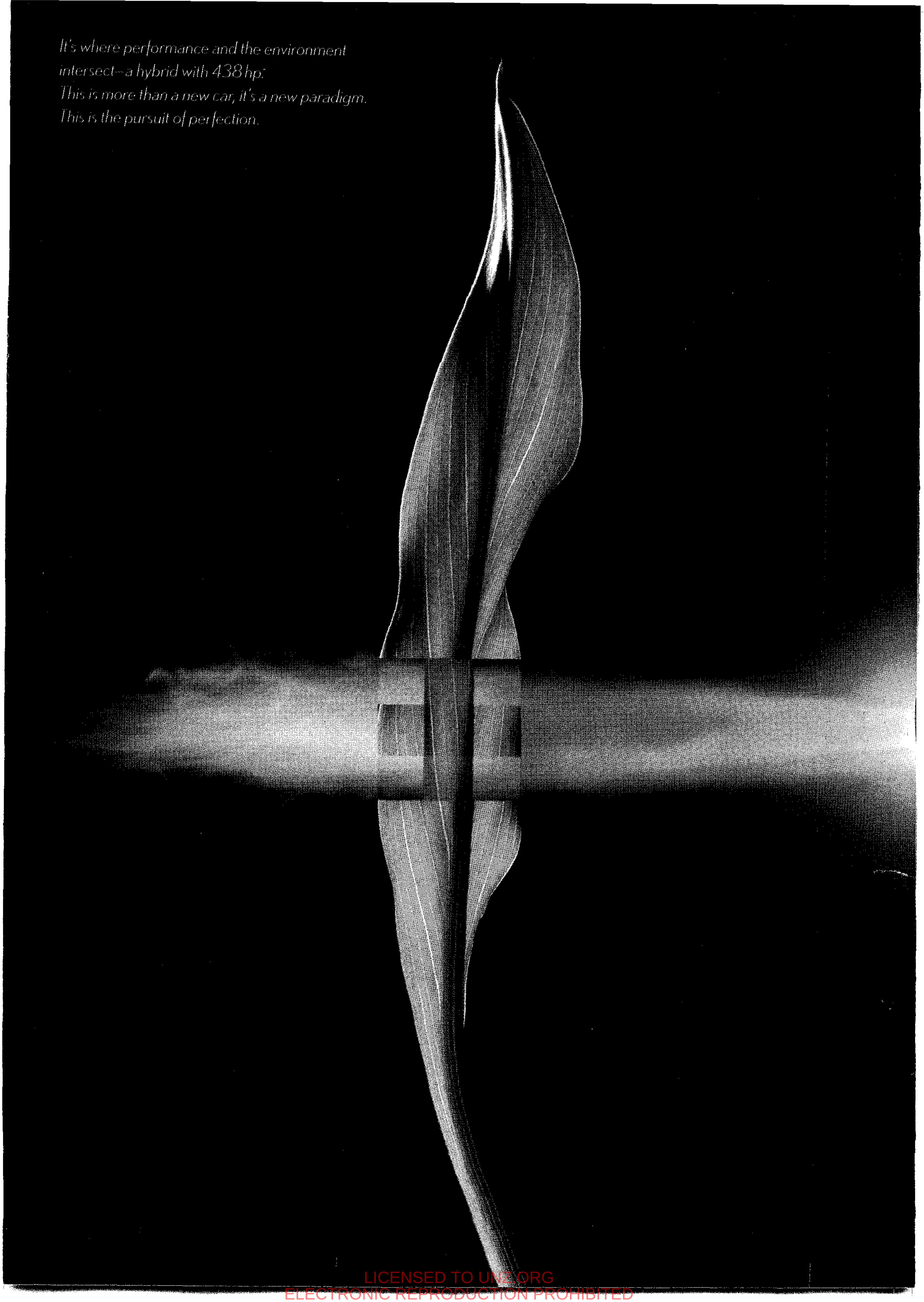
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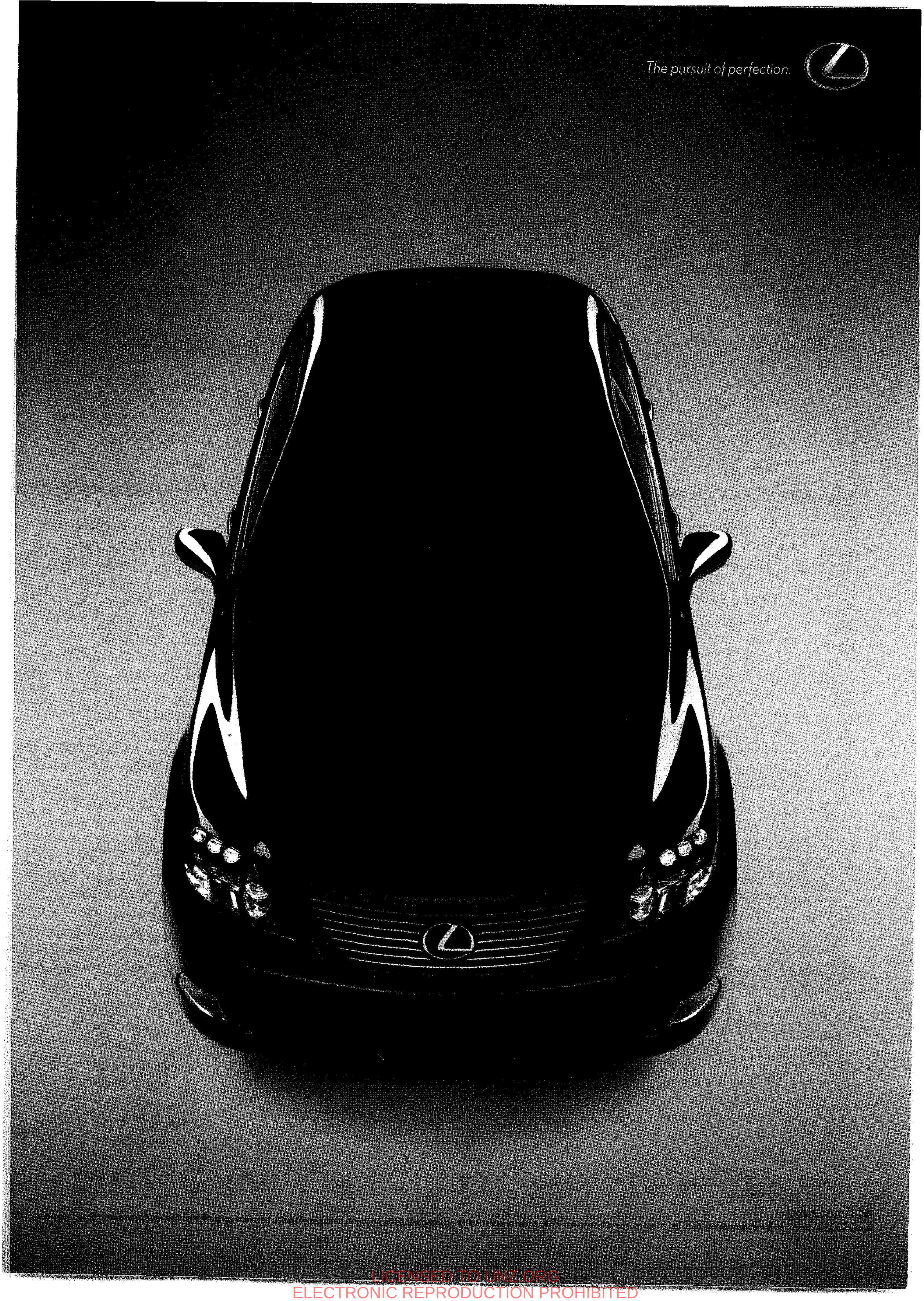
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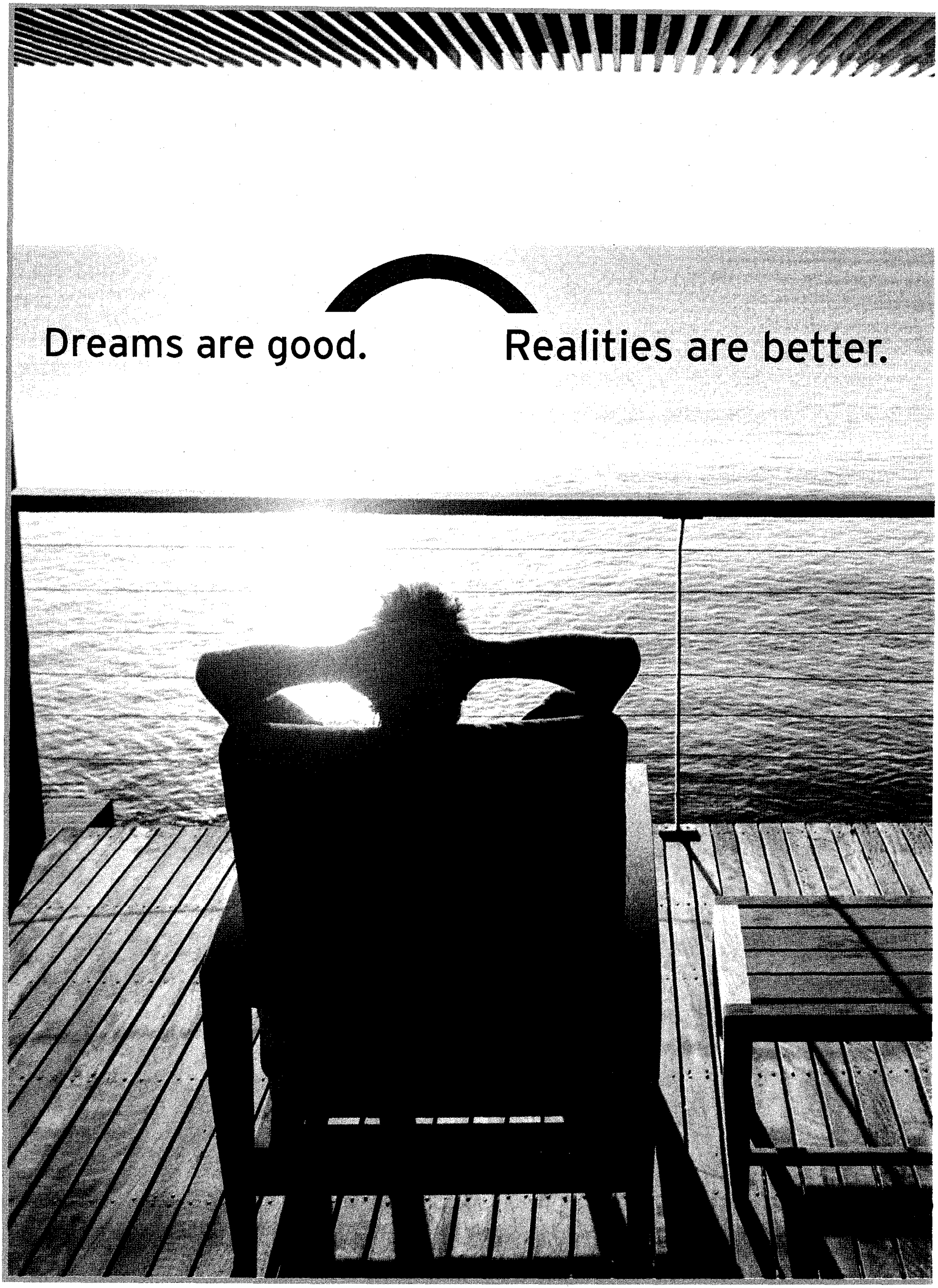
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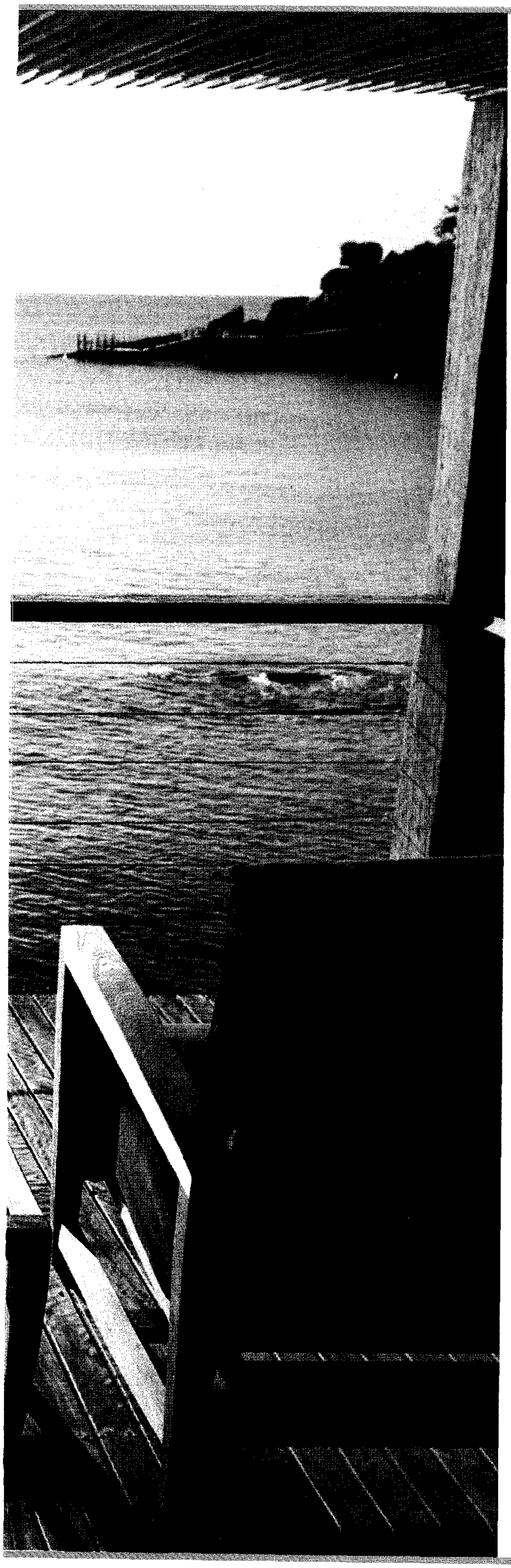

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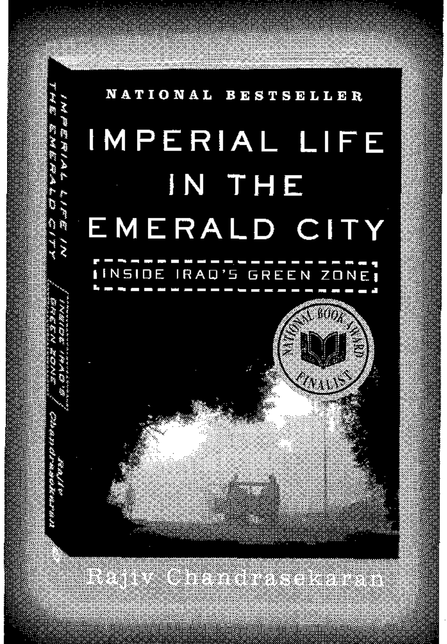

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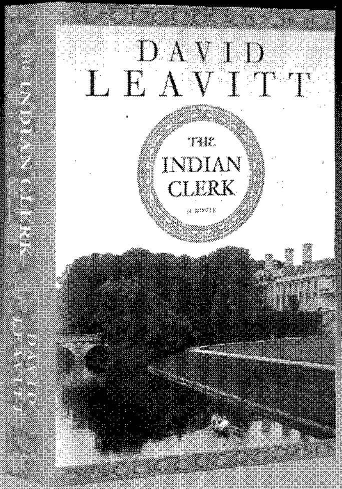

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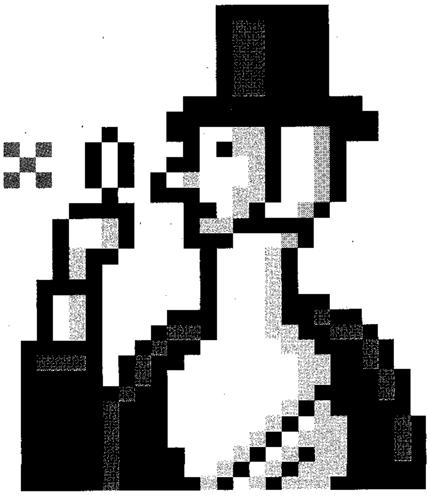
J. J. Sempé (Cover) has contributed to the magazine since 1978. Last year, he published four illustrated books and "Monsieur Lambert," a graphic novel.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

The New Yorker Out Loud: *William Finnegan* discusses the future of Kosovo. / A slide show of art work by Richard Prince. / Video of selected events from The New Yorker Festival. / *Paul Theroux* reads a favorite Borges story on the monthly fiction podcast. / A new pop-music blog by *Sasha Frere-Jones*, and blogs by *Hendrik Hertzberg*, *George Packer*, and *Dana Goodyear*. / From the archives: *Lillian Ross* on Wes Anderson, *James Surowiecki* on Richard Prince, and thousands of film reviews. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.



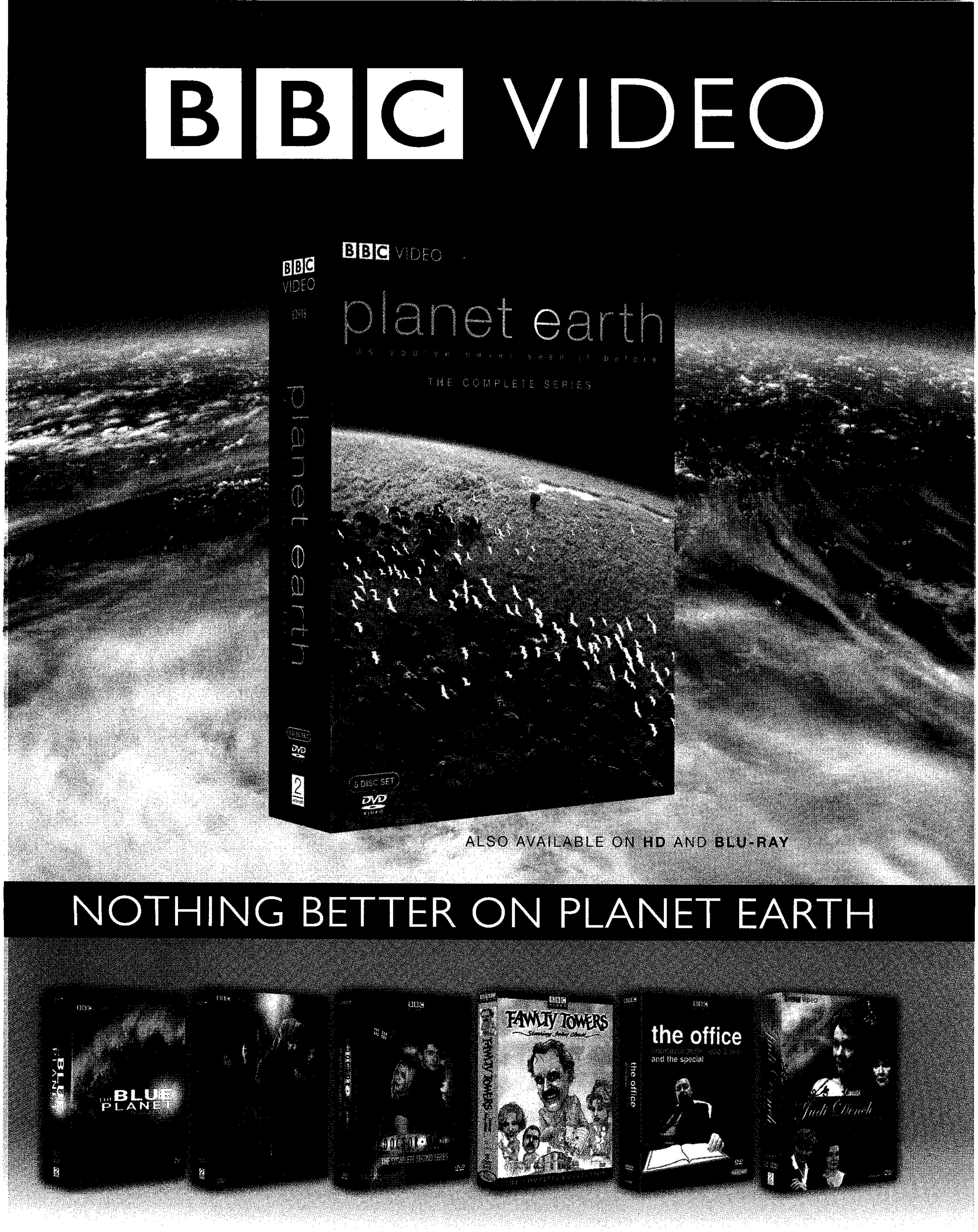

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PHOTO FINISHES

Anthony Lane's paean to the world's best camera—the M-series Leica rangefinder—hints at another reason that this camera is so loved by photojournalists and documentarians: it is not intimidating ("Candid Camera," September 24th). When I work with my two M6s, not only can I remain quiet but I do not look like a soldier with a weapon or a cop with a truncheon. Henri Cartier-Bresson carried his Leica in the crook of his arm, raising it to his eye to capture his famed "decisive moments"; his subjects were often unaware that they were being photographed. The great Danish photojournalist Claus Bjorn Larsen told me that he was able to make his award-winning Leica images in Kosovo precisely because he did not look like the typical photojournalist, bristling with long lenses attached to S.L.R. bodies whose shutters and motor drives sound ominously gunlike. And the Leica Ms forced Larsen to work close—to be near his subjects, and not to pick off his pictures like a hunter with a high-powered rifle and a scope. It's this forced intimacy that creates the difference between taking a picture and making one.

Frank Van Riper
Washington, D.C.

Normally, to extoll the virtues of a machine used in the process of taking a photograph would be a bit like giving credit to a No. 5 brush for the making of a great painting. But Lane's tribute to the Leica is not merely about a machine but also about the act of taking photographs despite the machine. A photographer doesn't have time to fight with his camera; the camera needs to obey his vision, not the other way around. As a photographer, I was especially taken with Lane's rephrasing of the meaning of the white frame lines inside the viewfinder: "To Leica fans, it is sacred, because it allows them to plan and imagine a photograph as an act of storytelling—an instant grabbed at will from a continuum. If you want a slice of life, why not see the loaf?" His statement expresses the photographer's process exactly: the pleasures and frustrations of "capturing" life inside a rectangular peephole. Anyone who has looked through the peephole of a camera has experienced this metaphorical sense of owning the scene that he or she is witnessing.

Neal Slavin
New York City

FAITH BASED

Jill Lepore's article on the Presidential-election contest of 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson speaks of the candidates' religious, philosophical, and cultural differences (Books, September 17th). Yet they had in common a background in Unitarianism. Adams was a member of the First Parish Church in Quincy, Massachusetts, which became Unitarian in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and is buried in its crypt. Jefferson, despite being best known as a deist, also had ties to the Unitarian faith, noting that because "the population of my neighborhood is too slender . . . I must therefore be contented to be a Unitarian by myself." But their Unitarian roots were very different. Adams's Unitarianism emerged from the split of the churches of the Standing Order (the Puritans) into the Unitarian and Congregational churches in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Jefferson's came more from the Enlightenment, in the person of Joseph Priestley, the English scientist and Unitarian minister who left England in 1794 because of his religious views and settled in Pennsylvania, where he and Jefferson developed a close friendship. The different visions for the newborn American nation taken by the two men and their parties came, to some extent, from the opposing values of their Puritan and Enlightenment origins.

Edwin A. Lane
Wellesley, Mass.

•

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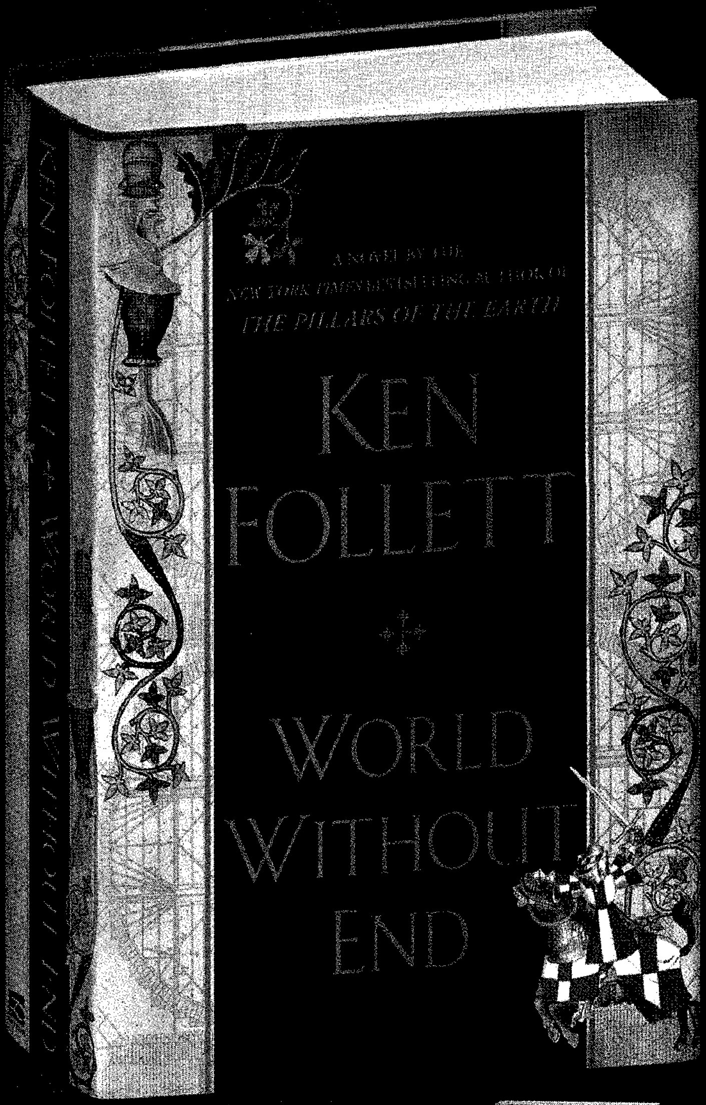
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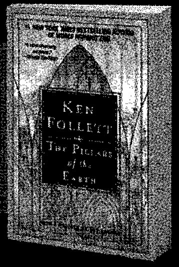
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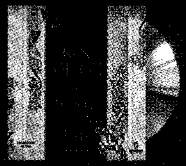

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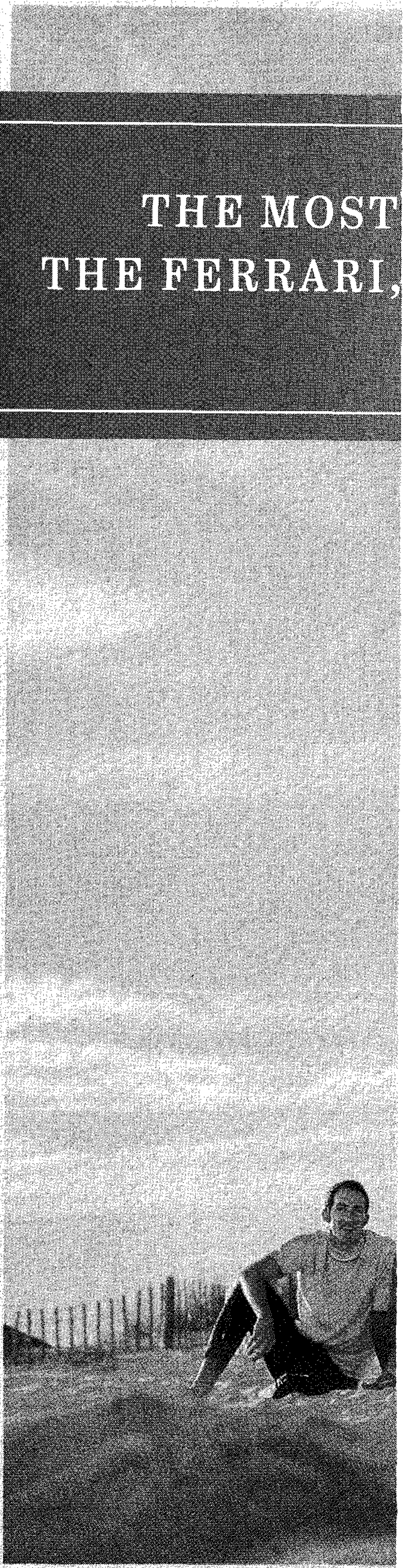

VALUABLE CAR IN HIS COLLECTION ISN'T THE COBRA OR THE ASTON MARTIN, BUT A 1968 BUS.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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14	15	16	10	11	12	13

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
IT'S ALL GREEK

The National Theatre of Greece returns to City Center with Sophocles' tragedy "Electra," for a five-day run. The German director Peter Stein, who helmed the acclaimed London production of "Blackbird" last year, makes his American theatrical début with the show. (See page 14.)

NIGHT LIFE
FINE PEDIGREE

Terminal 5, a three-thousand-capacity venue with a pair of wraparound balconies that give audience members a commanding view of the stage, opens this week. It is run by the Bowery Presents, New York-based rock-and-roll entrepreneurs who have had success with the Bowery Ballroom, the Mercury Lounge, and the Music Hall of Williamsburg. The local favorites the National play the first show. (See page 16.)

ART
BURIAL FOUND

For more than two millennia, starting around 2575 B.C., the ancient Egyptians used precious-metal and bronze statues as go-betweens with their deities. Nearly seventy of these statues are on view in "Gifts for the Gods: Images from Egyptian Temples," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (See page 17.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BRAZILIAN BROTHERS

"Art of the Guitar," the 92nd Street Y's delightful annual series, opens with a concert by Sérgio and Odair Assad, who combine performances of classical works by Rameau and Scarlatti with more recent (and more sensual) pieces by Piazzolla and Jobim. (See page 24.)

MOVIES
A NOVEL APPROACH

The writer Jonathan Lethem, who grew up in New York, spent many hours at the revival houses. His enthusiasm for classic movies is evident in a series at BAM of films he selected. The first week's offerings are Akira Kurosawa's "High and Low," which is both a crime story and a business melodrama, and Lindsay Anderson's "This Sporting Life," starring Richard Harris. (See page 28.)

Margaret Cho's burlesque variety show, "The Sensuous Woman." Photograph by Lisa Kereszi.

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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A BRONX TALE
The Broadway début of the one-man drama written by Chazz Palminteri in 1989, about his childhood in the Bronx. Palminteri stars; Jerry Zaks directs. In previews. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
Kevin Kline and Jennifer Garner star in Edmond Rostand's play from 1897, with a translation by Anthony Burgess. David Leveaux directs. Previews begin Oct. 12. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

DIE MOMMIE DIE!
The playwright Charles Busch premières this new comedy noir set in the nineteen-sixties, in which he stars as a past-her-prime pop diva. In previews. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

ELECTRA
National Theatre of Greece returns with the Sophocles tragedy, staged by the German director Peter Stein. In Greek with English supertitles. Oct. 10-14. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION
Hank Azaria and Jimmi Simpson star in a new play by Aaron Sorkin, about Philo Farnsworth, the boy genius who invented television, and David Sarnoff, the head of R.C.A., who challenged his patent ownership. Des McAnuff directs. Previews begin Oct. 15. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

A FEMININE ENDING
Sarah Treem wrote this drama, directed by Blair Brown, about a recent college graduate with an up-and-coming rock-star boyfriend and a mother on the brink of divorce. Marsha Mason stars. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

FRANKENSTEIN
A new musical inspired by Mary Shelley's novel, with music by Mark Baron, book and lyrics by Jeffrey Jackson, and adaptation by Gary P. Cohen. In previews. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

FUERZABRUTA
The creators of "De La Guarda" return, with a new production featuring a plenitude of special effects and water. Previews begin Oct. 11. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Square E. 212-239-6200.)

THE GLORIOUS ONES
A new musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty ("Ragtime"), based on the Francine Prose novel, set in sixteenth-century Italy, about a troupe of commedia-dell'arte actors. Graciela Daniele directs. Previews begin Oct. 11. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

HAMLET
The New York première of the Wooster Group's production, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

MINIMUM WAGE
An a-cappella musical about the employees of a fast-food burger joint, written by Sean Altman and Charlie and Jeff LaGreca. Guy Stroman directs. In previews. (The Green Room, 45 Bleecker St. 212-239-6200.)

NONE OF THE ABOVE
Jenny Lyn Bader wrote this play, about getting into Princeton. Julie Kramer directs. Opens Oct. 10. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE OVERWHELMING
Roundabout Theatre Company presents J. T. Rogers's drama, about an American family living in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

PYGMALION
Claire Danes and Jefferson Mays star in Shaw's classic drama, in a Roundabout Theatre Company production. David Grindley directs. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE RECEPTIONIST
Adam Bock wrote this dark comedy, about a highly competent receptionist (Jayne Houdyshell) whose work is interrupted by a visiting stranger. Joe Mantello directs. Previews begin Oct. 12. (New York City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE RITZ
Roundabout Theatre Company revives Terrence McNally's 1975 comedy, starring Rosie Perez and Kevin Chamberlin, in which a heterosexual man hides from a mobster in a gay bathhouse. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 11. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

SPAIN
Jim Knable wrote this romantic comedy, about the fantasy life of a divorcée. Annabella Sciorra stars. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

SPEECH & DEBATE
Stephen Karam's new play, about a high-school debate team in Oregon, presented by Roundabout Theatre Company. Jason Moore directs. In previews. (Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

A VIEW FROM 151ST STREET
LAByrinth Theatre Company presents a new drama by Bob Glaudini, about the denizens of Harlem. Peter DuBois directs. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN
Mel Brooks adapts his 1974 film into a musical; Thomas Meehan co-wrote and Susan Stroman choreographs and directs. Roger Bart, Megan Mullally, Sutton Foster, Andrea Martin, and Christopher Fitzgerald star. Previews begin Oct. 11. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

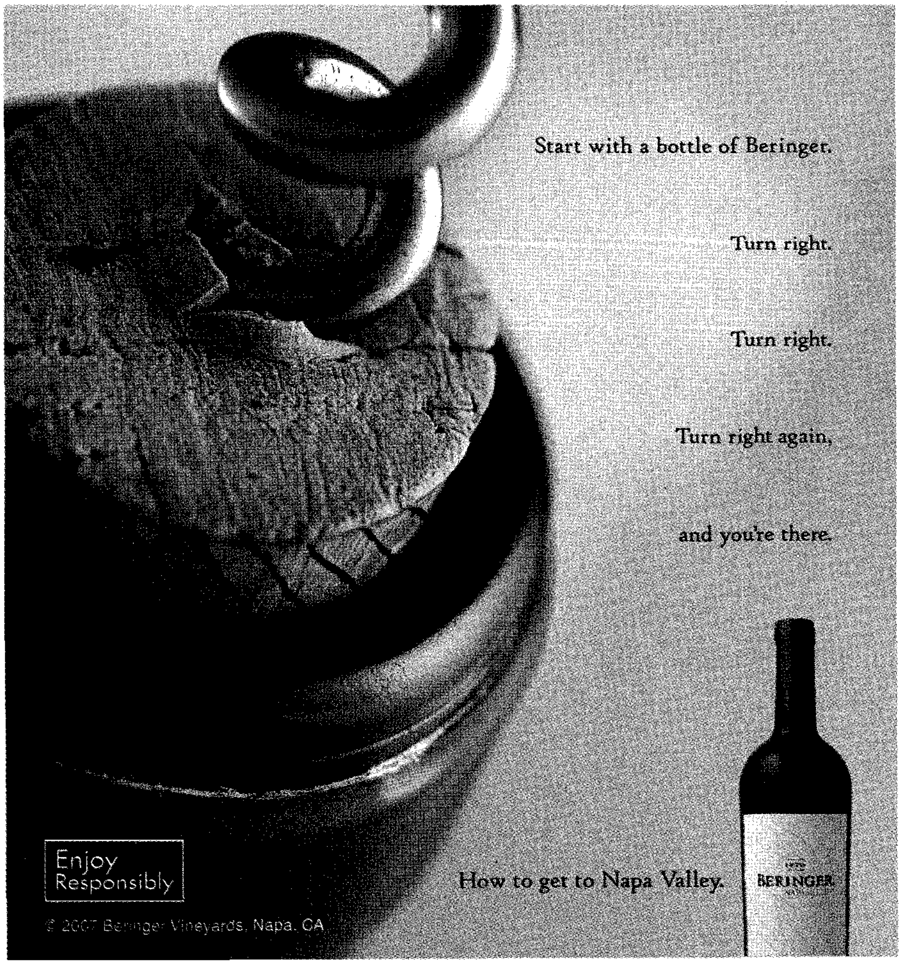
NOW PLAYING

DIVIDING THE ESTATE
Primary Stages presents the New York première of a comedy by Horton Foote. (Reviewed in this issue.) (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: RUDE AWAKENING
Another theatre season gone by yields another round of ripe targets for Gerard Alessandrini's long-running Broadway spoof: Bill T. Jones's choreography for "Spring Awakening," the self-accompanying actors in "Company" (and its brooding star, Raúl Esparza, whose big number, "Being Alive," is rewritten here as "Being Intense"), the flippered leading lady of the upcoming stage version of "The Little Mermaid." The "Grey Gardens" parody falls a little flat, as do a handful of others, but they're in the minority. Besides, they'll soon be swept away by yet another season's worth of big-budget schlock, arty misfires, questionable casting choices, and other follies of the stage. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

GREETINGS FROM YORKVILLE
Anya Turner and Robert Grusecki's two-person musical—essentially a cabaret act with a narrative thread—is about the songwriting careers of its creators, who are, as they sing, "ordinary people living ordinary lives [who] dream the most extraordinary dreams." Grusecki sits at a Steinway and plays and sings; Turner sings, narrates, and dances a little. The songs, some wistful, some comic, chronicle the pair's many years of trying to make it in New York after moving from the Midwest. Both performers have lovely voices, and the peppy songs make up for the show's occasional longueurs. Directed by the late Thommie Walsh. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

HAMLET
With the Wooster Group's deconstructed "Hamlet" on the horizon, the Pearl offers a straightforward, swords-and-all staging of the tragedy, under the mild-mannered direction of Shepard Sobel. (His most unorthodox move is to have the Ghost's lines come in over a speaker, which makes it seem a little like Hamlet is being summoned to the principal's office.) The actors tend to perform from the neck up, giving the well-recited language no corresponding dimension in the body and the bloodstream. Jolly



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Turn right.
Turn right.
Turn right again,
and you're there.
How to get to Napa Valley.
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Abraham is the exception, by turns fiery and frail as Ophelia. Abraham seems to be working in a different acting style from the rest of the cast—which, in this buttoned-up production, is a blessing. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

HOTEL CASSIOPEIA
Anne Bogart directs Charles Mee's play in a SITI Company production, about the life of Joseph Cornell. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through Oct. 13.)

MARGARET CHO'S THE SENSUOUS WOMAN
The comedian hosts a burlesque-inspired variety show in celebration of women's bodies. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-352-3101.)

MAURITIUS
Manhattan Theatre Club's production of a new drama by Theresa Rebeck. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE MISANTHROPE
The Belgian-born director Ivo van Hove has set Molière's brilliant 1666 comedy in a world that's largely made up of sleek dark glass and bright lights; video cameras follow the actors offstage and onto the street as we watch them wrestle with food, rubbish, and one another. As Alceste, Molière's deeply questioning realist hero, Bill Camp reads Arabic newspapers, and grumbles—at times, incoherently—at his friends or love interests as they check their cell phones and try to get reservations at a chic new restaurant. After about twenty minutes of this kind of banner waving—modern man is "wrong," empty, corrupt, morally compromised—the play starts to feel thin. How can van Hove have flattened a text that is so alive? Like the actors, he uses Molière to his own ends: less to explore theatre's potential than to show us how very clever he is. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THREE MO' TENORS
What looks like an iffy premise on paper—two rotating casts of little-known tenors performing opera lite on a bill with show tunes, soul, and pop—makes for a lively and unexpectedly moving evening, thanks in large part to the tenors' evident delight in performing. Marion J. Caffey, who conceived and directed the act as a showcase for African-American talent, knows how to deliver a schmalzy good time: his set looks like an upscale telethon, and amidst a flurry of costume changes he drops sly references to everyone from Gladys Knight to Usher. But it's the show's palpable earnestness that makes a lingering impression, whether in a fierce version of the gospel song "No Ways Tired" or an unabashedly sweet rendition of a sentimental old ballad. (Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE VEILED MONOLOGUES / IS.MAN
Adelheid Roosen's "Veiled Monologues," which chronicles relationships under Islam, and her "Is.Man," which looks at honor killings in Muslim families, run in repertory. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. 718-254-8779. Through Oct. 14.)

THE WOLVES IN THE WALLS
National Theatre of Scotland presents this children's story, about a girl who thinks there are wolves living in the walls of her house. Created by Vicky Featherstone, Nick Powell, and Julian Crouch ("Shockheaded Peter"). (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

Also Playing

AMERICAN SLIGO: Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Through Oct. 14. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GONE MISSING:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 220 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **SCARCITY:** Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TINGS DEY HAPPEN:** Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 9-10: **John Mayall** and **Dave Mason** are British rock royalty. Mayall's early-sixties blues band, the Bluesbreakers, was a finishing school for future greats such as Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor (later of the Rolling Stones), and Peter Green (later of Fleetwood Mac). Mason, by contrast, acted as a foil to Steve Winwood and Jim Capaldi in the legendary jazz-rock ensemble Traffic. Though outshined by their former colleagues, Mayall and Mason each have a sterling catalogue of solo material and continue recording and touring to this day. Oct. 11: **Y&T**, whose name is truncated from the title of an early Beatles album, "Yesterday and Today," had modest chart success in the eighties playing pop-metal paeans to girls, partying, and the power of rock. **Randy Jackson,** the helium-voiced front man of Zebra, opens the proceedings.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 10: **PJ Harvey.** The wee sprite from rural England was once called the savior of rock and roll; she has successfully thrown off that mantle with her eighth studio album, "White Chalk," which came out just last month. Reportedly inspired by classical music to make the album (she listened to Beethoven, Bach, and Handel before laying down the tracks), Harvey has delivered a collection that is sparse, tight, and on the cusp of being impenetrable. Harvey sings at the upper reaches of her register, and the dominant instrument is a lonesome piano. For all its austerity, however, it doesn't lack affecting drama. Oct. 13: Burly, experimental post-rock collides with old-school prog rock in the enigmatic **Porcupine Tree**, from the U.K.

"BLARNEY STAR CONCERTS"
The noted Irish fiddler **Brendan Mulvihill** makes a rare solo appearance. (Glucksman Ireland House, New York University, 1 Washington Mews. 212-998-3950. Oct. 12.)

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 10: The guitarist, singer, and songwriter **Jason Isbell,** formerly of the Drive By Truckers, pays a visit with material from his highly polished solo collection of Southern-tinged rock, "Sirens of the Ditch." Oct. 12: The **Raveonettes**, a stylish Danish duo, specialize in noirish, punky pop.

CARNEGIE HALL
57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Oct. 10: **Aimee Mann, Roger McGuinn, Raul Malo,** and many others turn out to honor Elton John and his longtime collaborator, Bernie Taupin.

EUROPA NIGHT CLUB
98-104 Meserole Ave., at Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-383-5723)—Oct. 13: The Prague-based avant-rock quintet **Uz Jsme Doma** (loosely translated as "Now I Get It") is touring the U.S. for the first time in six years to perform songs from "Cod Liver Oil," its most recent album. This unclassifiable group was founded in 1985 in the small Czechoslovakian town of Teplice, and for the first few years its shows were declared "illegal" by the government and it was forced either to perform in underground locales or risk having its gigs shut down by the police. Though its sound and personnel have changed in the ensuing years, the band has never wavered from its iconoclastic vision. The new record is a potent and complex mixture of odd-metered prog-rock rhythms, passionate Slavic vocals, and boisterous horns.

"A GREAT DAY ON ELDRIDGE STREET"
This Lower East Side klezmer version of Harlem's Great Day, back in 1958, brings ninety international artists to the steps of the Eldridge Street Synagogue for a group photograph on Oct.

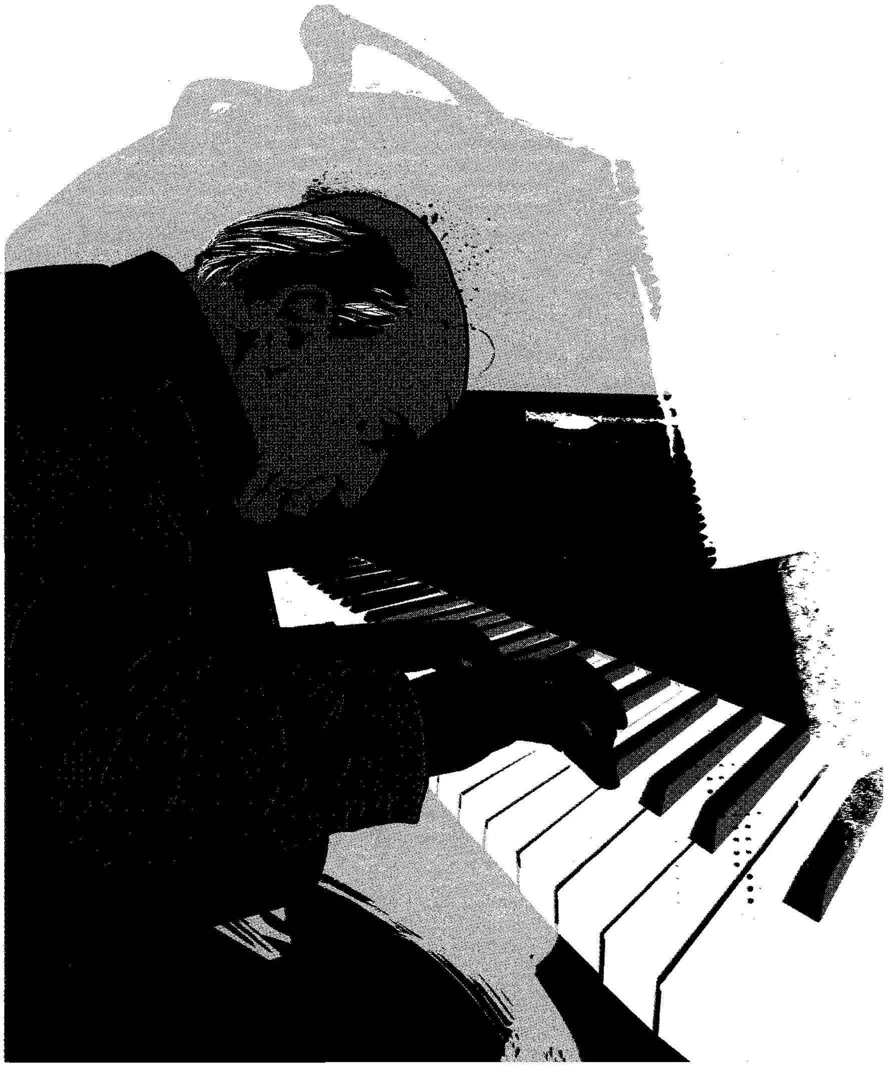
It took us
125 years
to use the
first trillion
barrels of oil.

We'll use
the next
trillion in 30.

Transportation fuel consumption is expected to increase more than 50% by 2030.

12 at 11 A.M. This gathering will be followed by a procession starting at Canal and Eldridge Sts. at noon and by a free concert in Seward Park. Two days later, a number of the musicians will schlep uptown for a concert at Symphony Space. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 14.)

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 16: The compelling young piano player and singer **Regina Spektor** was born in Moscow, but she grew up in the Bronx and made a name for herself on the local anti-folk scene. She has a pungent and engaging take on the singer-songwriter genre.



The French jazz pianist Martial Solal performs solo at the Village Vanguard.

ULLA PUGGAARD

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 10: **Maroon 5**, gamely striving to evade a sophomore slump, is touring to promote its new album of smooth, libidinous pop, "It Won't Be Soon Before Long," the follow-up to its mega-successful début, "Songs About Jane." In a bold move, the band has selected the **Hives** as an opening act. This Swedish band is a garage-punk SWAT team whose notorious gale-force live assault puts Maroon 5's radio fodder at risk of sounding even more tepid than usual.

MO PITKIN'S HOUSE OF SATISFACTION
34 Ave. A, between 2nd and 3rd Sts. (212-777-5660)—Oct. 11: The **Chandler Travis Philharmonette.** The irreverent guitarist, singer, and composer Travis, who lives on Cape Cod and has been known to perform barefoot and in his pajamas, has been in show biz for nearly four decades. Beginning in the seventies, he co-led the musical act that opened for George Carlin on his tours. His other band, the Incredible Casuals, got its start in the eighties and is a fixture on the New England music scene. Expect mind-bending wordplay mixed with Dixieland jazz, shimmering rock, and horn-fuelled R. & B. Note: After two years, this venue is closing, on Oct. 21.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—Oct. 11: The **National**, a quintet of Ohio transplants who live in Brooklyn, christen this venue. The band's foundation are two pairs of brothers who keep the overtly romantic, au-courant indie rock tight, but it's the mesmerizing baritone of the lead singer, Matt Berninger, that makes its songs stick in your head.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Oct. 13: The Broadway veteran **KT Sullivan**, in a program of hits from the heyday of the Great White Way.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Oct. 9-14: The singer **Karrin Allyson** is joined by another excellent, if far less recognizable, vocalist, the West Coast-based **Nancy King**, for three nights of this run, Oct. 11-13.

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
A show with a pair of trios. Manhattan Trinity unites three of the most elegant of jazz players—the pianist **Cyrus Chestnut**, the bassist **George Mraz**, and the drummer **Lewis Nash**—for suitably polished results. 3 Guitars delivers main-

stream jazz par excellence from **Bucky Pizzarelli, Frank Vignola,** and **James Chirillo.** (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Oct. 11.)

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Oct. 9-10: **Aaron Goldberg,** a crafty modern pianist, fronts a trio featuring two formidable players, the bassist **Reuben Rogers** and the drummer **Eric Harland.** Oct. 11-14: **Ben Allison,** an ambitious bassist and composer who displays a knack for assembling adroit bands, leads a quartet featuring **Ron Horton,** on trumpet, and **Steve Cardenas,** on guitar. Oct. 15: The **Carolyn Leonhart Group.** Leonhart, who has spent an extended period of time as a backup singer for Steely Dan, is an assured jazz stylist. She receives support from her husband, the saxophonist **Wayne Escoffery.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Mondays through Oct. 22: The vocalist **Judy Kuhn** performs a program devoted to the work of the late Laura Nyro, the singer-songwriter behind "Stoned Soul Picnic," "Eli's Coming," and other pop gems.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Oct 14: This downtown club, which is in the midst of marking its twenty-fifth anniversary, brings in the Argentine saxophonist **Gato Barbieri** for his seventy-fifth birthday. Barbieri, an unclassifiable stylist, is one of the few artists to bridge the wide divide between fevered improvisation and the rhapsodic rhythms of smooth jazz.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 9-14: To label **Martial Solal** the greatest European jazz pianist does him a disservice; the cognoscenti know he's the world champ. The Algerian native, who moved to Paris when he was twenty-two, celebrates his eightieth birthday here, presenting his staggering virtuosity and proudly idiosyncratic style in a week of solo performances. A live recording is promised, but you'll be pleased to tell your grandchildren you witnessed the Master in action. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZEBULON
258 Wythe Ave., between Metropolitan Ave. and N. 3rd St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-218-6934)—Oct. 16: **CircuitBreaker,** the latest project from the composer and electrifying guitarist **Jon Madof** (of Rashanim), combines Fela Kuti-infused funk with the avant-garde sensibility and conducting style of John Zorn, with whom Madof regularly collaborates.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Age of Rembrandt: Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Bridging East and West: The Chinese Diaspora and Lin Yutang."** Through Feb. 10, 2008. ♦ **"Abstract Expressionism and Other Modern Works: The Muriel Kallis Steinberg Newman Collection."** In two concentrated periods, between 1952 and 1954, and then again in the early sixties, the Chicago art collector Muriel Kallis Steinberg Newman amassed a stellar collection of modern art, which she recently donated to the Met. The earliest piece here is a 1919 Kurt Schwitters collage; the most recent is a Kenneth Noland target painting from 1961. In between are iconic examples from the titans of modernism—Gorky, de Kooning, Pollock, Kline—as well as equally great works by less-famous artists, including a fiery, blue-and-orange canvas by Jack Tworkov and a painting collaged with gray and beige patches by Conrad Marca-Relli, which marries architectonics and arabesques. Through Feb. 3, 2008. ♦ **"Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840-1860."** More than a hundred rare examples of the calotype—photography's first practical positive-negative process—have been assembled for a show that is predictably scholarly but unexpectedly ravishing. As with so much work from the medium's early years, the most ordinary pictures here feel driven by the photographer's desire to record the world in all its variety: a sleeping dog, a shattered tree, an embroidered saddle, a ruined abbey, the Crystal Palace, the Taj Mahal. Although the images are primarily straightforward documents, these warm-toned prints are often extraordinary—soft, slightly smudged, burnished by time, with an astonishing presence. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Gifts for the Gods: Images from Egyptian Temples."** Opens Oct. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Lines, Grids, Stains, Words."** Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Present Tense: Photographs by JoAnn Verburg."** Through Nov. 5. ♦ **"Lost Vanguard: Soviet Modernist Architecture, 1922-1932."** Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"New Photography 2007: Tanyth Berkeley, Scott McFarland, Berni Searle."** Through Jan. 1, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Richard Prince: Spiritual America."** Through Jan. 8, 2008. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love."** Opens Oct. 11. ♦ **"Neither New Nor Correct: New Work by Mark Bradford."** Through Nov. 25. ♦ **"Danny Lyon: Montage, Film, and Still Photography."** Through Dec. 2. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—**"Undone."** The museum's small gallery appears to be closed (it isn't). Weeds—cast-metal facsimiles by Tony Matelli—spied through the locked glass doors, sprout from cracks in the floor. In the public atrium, Heather Rove's screen made of two-by-fours and embedded with mirrors, and Tom Holmes's chain-link fence, embellished with blown-up images of cans and bottles, lend the space the air of a construction zone. Perched high in an easy-to-miss second-floor window is a hard-to-decipher photograph by Eileen Quinlan, printed on perforated vinyl (it's a picture of mirrors). The artists and the exhibition's curators seem to propose a dismantling of the conventions of sculpture, photography, and architecture—but the concept feels half-baked. "Underdone" might have been a better title. Through Dec. 31. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ The Butterfly Conservatory is open for its tenth season, with a display of tropical species. Through May 26, 2008. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. ♦ **"Brushed with Light: American Landscape Watercolors from the Collection."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—The Venetian-born Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78) was, of course, a peerless engraver, but **"Piranesi as Designer"** focusses on the architect's far-reaching imagination. Discipline and whimsy merge in studies of ruins, in *carceri d'invenzione* (extravagant visions for impossible prisons that sparked the imaginations of Coleridge, Kafka, and Borges), and in rococo-tinged furniture, several examples of which are on view. Despite his prodigious out-

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The world is growing by more than 70 million people a year.

So is that a problem, or a solution?

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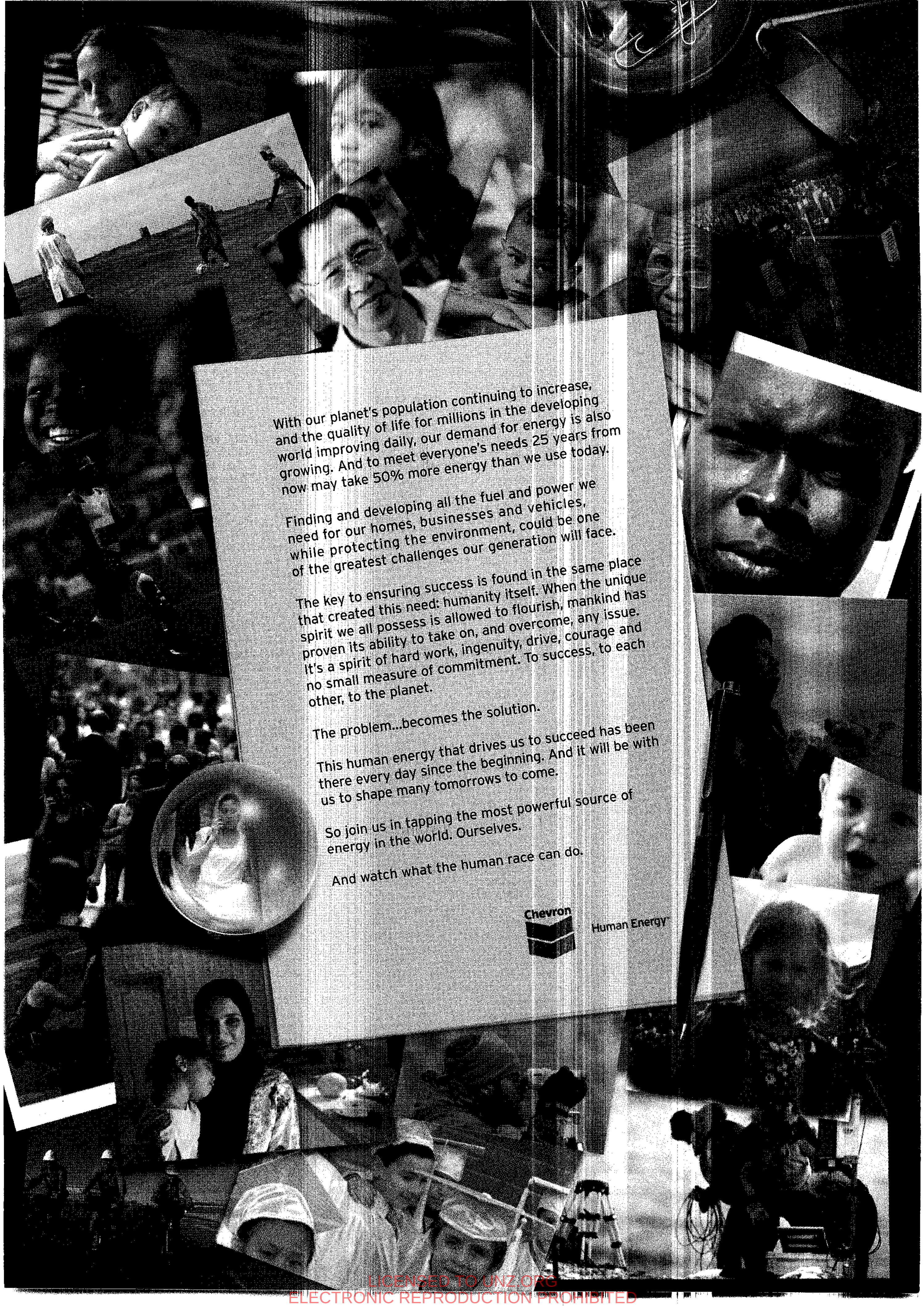

With our planet's population continuing to increase, and the quality of life for millions in the developing world improving daily, our demand for energy is also growing. And to meet everyone's needs 25 years from now may take 50% more energy than we use today.

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The problem...becomes the solution.

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And watch what the human race can do.

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put in other mediums, only one of Piranesi's architectural projects—a restoration of a church in Rome—was ever completed. His influence is nonetheless lasting, and is discussed here in a series of videotaped interviews with contemporary designers—among them Daniel Liebskind, who observes that Piranesi "invented a world where architecture was almost redundant." Through Jan. 20, 2008. ♦ **"Provoking Magic: Lighting of Ingo Maurer."** Through Jan. 20, 2008. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"This Is War! Robert Capa at Work."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Gerda Taro."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—Émile Bernard (1868-1941) had only modest abilities as a painter, but his talent for friendship was great. **"Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard"** presents twenty letters that van Gogh wrote between 1887 and 1889 (Bernard's letters are lost). The Frenchman brought out his friend's ardent streak: trees in the Arles countryside inspire reveries about color, light, and form; of the sun in southern France, he writes, "I revel in it like a cicada." Sketches grace the letters, along with descriptions of technique; a selection of works by both artists provide reference points. Among the many revelations here is one disarmingly simple plan: "A starry sky for example, well—it's a thing that I should like to try to do." Through Jan. 6, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

GUILLERMO KUITCA
Opera is this Argentine artist's muse. In 2003, he designed stage sets for a Buenos Aires production of "The Flying Dutchman," in which a baggage carousel ferried the hero's drifting soul around the stage. Drawings related to that project are here, along with a row of melted-looking little works on paper based on the seating plans of opera houses around the world. Printed on photographic paper, then gently smeared and warped, these colorful charts take on abstract, even musical qualities, and invert the usual theatrical formula, focussing attention away from the stage and toward the audience. Through Nov. 1. (Gallery Met, Broadway at 64th St. 212-799-3100.)

"THE WRITER'S BRUSH"
This exhibition of paintings and drawings, organized by Donald Friedman, offers a delicious peek into the artistic pursuits of some eighty authors, from John Ashbery and Djuna Barnes to Günter Grass and Sylvia Plath. There are more than a hundred and ninety works, some by familiar visual thinkers like Henri Michaux and James Thurber, others by sleepers like Jonathan Lethem (whose colorful little paintings have a neo-expressionist zing). Most take up no more space than a desk corner, but otherwise they vary wildly, from a misty, wistful watercolor of the lake at Coole Park, by William Butler Yeats, to an appropriately fanciful zebra-tiger sketched in ink, by Jorge Luis Borges. Through Oct. 27. (Shapolsky, 152 E. 65th St. 212-452-1094.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

RACHAEL DUNVILLE
The color portraits in Dunville's New York début show were made in what the photographer calls "a distilled state of emotional undress." Several of the most striking involve physical undress as well: a young couple stand naked in the shower, and other subjects (all of them Dunville's friends in Missouri) pull down their pants, lift up their shirts, or otherwise strip for the camera. But nudity without emotional connection doesn't mean much, and the strongest images here are not just sexy, they're full of warmth and empathy—evidence of a genuine, complicated, and utterly engaging exchange. Through Oct. 20. (Peer, 526 W. 26th St. 212-741-6599.)

LAURA LETINSKY
With nods to both Irving Penn and Jan Groover, Letinsky makes large color photographs of elegantly dishevelled tabletop still-lifes that are at once antic and restrained. In her newest series, however, she's no longer imagining the remains of a dinner party; the wine-stained tablecloth has been replaced by a wrinkled sheet of white paper, the stemware by a bitten Styrofoam cup or a crumpled Sunkist can. Although there's no pretense that these arrangements are accidental, they never feel anxious or overdetermined, and every bit of color (a crushed berry, a pink net bag) pops in these witty, otherwise white-on-white landscapes. Through Oct. 27. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

ALEKSANDRA MIR
For this low-tech, amusing, and tacitly critical study of what is commonly known as "the news," Mir collected fifteen years' worth of front pages from the New York *Daily News* and the New York *Post*. Setting up a real-time newsroom-cum-atelier in the gallery, she and a team of assistants are sorting some ten thousand cover stories into categories and, armed with Sharpies, transforming them into posters. On a recent visit, the theme was weather, and the walls were papered with headlines alternately bemoaning heat waves ("Phew!") and blizzards ("Socked!"). On deck in the workshop was a series whose every headline read "Cop Shot!" Through Oct. 27. (Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

KEITH TYSON
In the installation "Large Field Array," two hundred and twenty objects—each roughly the shape of a two-foot cube—are laid out in a grid that fills the floor and studs the walls. Distinctions between nature and culture blur. A Plexiglas vat of bubbling mud rhymes visually with a movie marquee advertising "Top Gun" and "Blue Velvet." The moon is square. So is the earth, and both are the size of an Orange amplifier. Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights" and Caravaggio's "Medusa" put in appearances, as do the U.S. Presidential seal, a cardboard box of giant kitchen utensils, and a stock-market L.E.D. crawl. It's part pop gazetteer, part sculptural tag sale. Through Oct. 20. (PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258.)

JACK WHITTEN
This capsule survey of works made between 1974 and 2007 spotlights an artist who has helped to radicalize abstract painting without ever lifting a brush. A quartet of recent, mosaic-like canvases look like experiments with bathroom tile, but they're actually composed of little squares of cast acrylic paint (sparkles are the result of pulverized compact disks). A suite of smeary, black-and-white drawings from the mid-nineteen-seventies have an eerily photographic effect—they could be portraits of afterglow. Turns out they were made from photocopier toner, while Whitten was an artist-in-residence at Xerox. Through Oct. 20. (Gray, 526 W. 26th St. 212-399-2636.)

Short List

WILLEM DE KOONING: Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717. Through Oct. 27. **JAMIE ISENSTEIN:** Kreps, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849. Through Oct. 20. **COLLIER SCHORR:** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Through Oct. 27. **KETAKI SHETH:** Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444. Through Oct. 20.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

HANNO OTTEN
This German photographer's vividly colored abstract images have been getting bigger with each exhibition, but the scale of his new work is still startling. At more than six feet tall, the pictures, derived from photograms, look like stained-glass windows conceived by a hip fifties graphic designer (Saul Bass, perhaps; there's a distinct "Vertigo" echo in the jazzy concentric circles). Otten undercuts the work's decorative effect by collapsing its geometry, keeping the colors tart, and butting one hue up against another until they both shatter at the edges. Through Oct. 27. (Borden, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-431-0166.)

OLIVER PAYNE AND NICK RELPH
After moving from London to Los Angeles, these two young blokes—best known for their videos—have been struck by the design bug. Witness the update of Duchamp's readymade "Bicycle Wheel," with a plastic stool and an aerodynamic racing wheel, or the Aeron chair fitted with denim and tie-dyed fleece, in lieu of black mesh. Films of abstract patterns are projected through clear acrylic chairs. A text describes long hours spent lying on a daybed in a "modernist Hollywood apartment." The show that this lounging inspired is stylish, even funny at times, but it relies too heavily on a vapid California-dreaming approach. Through Oct. 13. (Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.)

DANCE

**"PAMINA DEVI:
A CAMBODIAN MAGIC FLUTE"**
One classicism meets another in Sophiline Cheam Shapiro's Cambodian retelling of Mozart's "The Magic Flute." Or, rather, of Schickaneder's "Magic Flute," since it's the story, and not the music, that gets adapted. The courtly refinement, splendor, and high stylization of the Cambodian tradition match those of the Masonic original, but there's no Mozartean effervescence in the slow-going, single-speed remake. The twenty-two dancers and ten musicians of the Khmer Arts Ensemble exhibit a different kind of grace. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 9-10 at 7:30, Oct. 11-12 at 8, Oct. 13 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 14 at 2 and 7:30.)

"BUTOH PARADE"
Between this three-week festival and a month of the overlapping New York Butoh Festival (put on by the arts organization CAVE), there should be enough of the austere dance form to satiate the connoisseur and tempt the curious. Japan Society's selections start out with two programs by Kochuten and the shamanistic patriarch Akaji Maro. "Tiger's Cave" is all-male; "Yupiters," all-female. For a full schedule, see www.japansociety.org. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. Oct. 9-10 and Oct. 12-13 at 7:30.)

DONNA UCHIZONO COMPANY
"Thin Air" plays some heady perception games, incorporating projected video and paint with the dancing trio of Hristoula Harakas, Julie Alexander, and Antonio Ramos. In both the choreography and the score, by Fred Frith, though, high concept is continually leavened with self-mocking, even goofy, wit. A formal contrast between large-scale and minute movement runs alongside that of broad comedy and subtle inside jokes. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Oct. 9-13 at 7:30.)

BALLET NY
The former New York City Ballet dancer Judith Fugate and her husband, Mehdi Bahiri, have managed to keep their chamber ballet alive for almost ten years. This season, the dancer Sean Stewart's fluid upper body and Laura Feig's soulful precision bring grace and authority to Thaddeus Davis's convoluted duet "Vivaldian Chat." The program also includes two new pieces, "Table Games," by William Soleau, and "Manny's Mission," Lisa de Ribère's cheeky take on Israeli folk dancing, as well as a work by Helen Heineman, "Replacements," set to Tuvan throat singing. (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Oct. 9 at 7:30 and Oct. 10-12 at 8.)

ARTE Y PUREZA
For a flamenco troupe to name itself "Art and Purity" gives off certain signals. There is no modernizing or fusion for this Seville-based company.

TABLES FOR TWO
ZENKICHI

77 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-388-8985)—This multilevel den, hidden at the far end of an über-hip Williamsburg stretch, is mostly recognizable by the small, come-hither red light shining above its doorway. Inside, diners are ensconced in dimly lit private cells, curtained off by bamboo blinds and connected by shadowy stone-slab-and-pebble walkways. Servers are discreet; they appear almost instantaneously at the press of a call button, but otherwise the blinds stay drawn. One night, over the soft hum of jazz standards, the only evidence of other patrons was the not so faint sounds of a make-out session. Two unsuspecting guys ("Wanna grab a bite tonight? Hit that new Japanese place?") were left to fidget in their chamber and chat uncomfortably about ex-girlfriends.

Thankfully, Zenkichi's sake list doubles the length of its menu, and such unease can be quickly ameliorated. The Wakatake Onikoroshi ("Original Demon Slayer") and the Suirakuten ("Heaven of Tipsy Delight") did the trick, though the Escher-esque layout of the dining rooms, complete with wall-length mirrors at every turn—and there are lots of turns—makes a case for moderation. The food, in portions meant for sharing, aims for innovation and arrives with astonishing celerity. The *maguro* carpaccio, drizzled in sesame oil and white soy sauce, had a refreshing, sweet zip. The *anago*-and-cream-cheese tempura felt delightfully gluttonous; the cream cheese may have overwhelmed the saltwater eel, but no matter. A *tsukune* chicken, packed in a hollowed-out bamboo stick and speckled with sesame seeds, looked pretty and tasted better, but the grilled *saikyo* black cod, advertised as a chef's favorite, was a bland disappointment.

The meal concluded, after a radioactively pink dessert of grapefruit jelly, with a dozen bows and thank-yous and an inquiry into a diner's favorite item by a particularly earnest waitress. "I'll tell the chef," she said. "We must improve for our customers." A few patrons, evidently wishing to continue their night of intimacy, were spotted wandering hopefully across the street to scope out a shop called Mikey's Hook Up. The moon was out, and the name seemed promising. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays for dinner. Dishes $5-$13; tasting menu $88 for two.)

—Mike Peed

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The songs and the singers, led by the dandyish Miguel El Funi, dominate. El Funi and Javier Fernandez are practitioners of the old—but rarely seen in New York—tradition of *cante y baile casero*; they're song-and-dance men. And the San Diego native Cihtli Ocampo looks authentic enough, whether she's dancing in a long-trained dress or a man's suit. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Oct. 10 at 8.)

DANSKDANSETEATER
Founded in 1981 but directed and reshaped by the British transplant Tim Rushton since 2001, the Copenhagen-based troupe makes its New York début with a sampler of excerpts. "Bach Suites" and "Silent Steps" both create some community out of the composer's harpsichord concertos, while "Animal Park" is all urban jungle, complete with an ambient soundscape by Biosphere. "Kridt" is more focussed and effective, a haunting abstraction of a man's death. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 11-13 at 8.)

REBECCA LAZIER
The 92nd Street Y's "Sundays @ Three" series starts up again with Lazier and her company, Terrain. "Serenade" jumps off from the Balanchine original, with a sound score that plays the Tchaikovsky music through out-of-synch tape decks. The work in progress "Terminal" explores waiting, moving, and the attempt to move the body in four different ways at once. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 14 at 3.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
At the Guggenheim, eight dancers from Christopher Wheeldon's new company, Morphoses/the Wheeldon Company, will offer a preview of their upcoming début season at City Center. Excerpts will include two Wheeldon works ("Mesmerics" and the new work "There Where She Loved") and one by William Forsythe ("Slingerland Pas de Deux," from 1989). The dancers include Anastasia Yatsenko, of the Bolshoi; the Ballet Boyz Michael Nunn and William Trevitt; Wendy Whelan; and Maria Kowroski. Wheeldon, his executive director, Lourdes Lopez, and the dance historian and critic Lynn Garafola will discuss the enormous undertaking of creating a new ballet company. The event is sold out, but a standby line will form at 6:30 P.M. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Oct. 14-15 at 7:30.)

COMPAÑÍA NACIONAL DE DANZA
After a six-year absence, Spain's premier ensemble returns to New York with three strong dances by its director, Nacho Duato. The themes are lurid: courtship dances in sixteenth-century Spain in "Por Vos Muero," the gelded singers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in "Castrati," and the modern ravages of drug abuse in "White Darkness." Yet most of the drama lies where it should, in the steps and the music. Duato's distortions of classical style are more expressive than sensational, and his expert ensemble etches them in fine detail. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 16 at 7:30. Through Oct. 20.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Jonathan Miller's production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Lisette Oropesa, Michele Pertusi, and Erwin Schrott; Philippe Jordan, a fine young Mozartean, conducts. (Oct. 10 at 8 and Oct. 13 at 1:30.) ♦ One might wish for a more authentically girlish demeanor, but Anna Netrebko's dazzling, vampish presence and rich, colorful voice offer a solid foundation for the Met's revival of Gounod's **"Roméo et Juliette"**; Stéphane Degout, in contrast, brings Gallic brilliance and élan to the role of Mercutio. Joseph Kaiser, a highly touted young tenor, is making his Met début as Roméo, as is the impressive mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard in the role of Stéphano; Plácido Domingo conducts, with style. (Oct. 11 at 8.) ♦ Last year's season began with An-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
EASTWARD HO!

It takes nerve to screen "La Chinoise" at any time, and this is an especially raw moment, you might think, at which to introduce a new generation of viewers to Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 paean to revolutionary terrorism. How will they react to the proposition that a university be blown up or to the spectacle of a toy U.S. tank being pelted with copies of the Little Red Book? The new print, which runs at Film Forum Oct. 10-18, should highlight the crisp, flag-red accents that gleam in every scene, as five young French Maoists (headed by Anne Wiazemsky, the star of Robert Bresson's "Au Hasard Balthazar" and later Godard's second wife) form a cell in a Paris apartment and debate its next move. At its release, prior to the upheavals of 1968, the film was lauded for its speedy wit, as if the overthrow of the bourgeoisie could be framed as Pop art. Now we know too much. According to one estimate, twenty-seven million people died in labor camps and prisons under Mao Zedong. Can it still be fun, then, to watch a young French beauty tune into Radio Peking?

—*Anthony Lane*

thony Minghella's ravishingly cinematic production of **"Madama Butterfly"**; it returns, boasting an arguably superior cast that features Patricia Racette and Roberto Alagna; Mark Elder. (Oct. 12 and Oct. 15 at 8.) ♦ Peter Gelb's second opening-night gamble is a successful one: a sober but involving new production, by Mary Zimmerman, of **"Lucia di Lammermoor,"** in which a glittering cast (including Natalie Dessay, Marcello Giordani, Mariusz Kwiecien, and John Relyea) sings under the experienced direction of James Levine. (Oct. 13 at 8.) ♦ Sonja Frisell's grand production of **"Aida,"** with Angela M. Brown, Dolora Zajick, and Marco Berti; Kazushi Ono. (Oct. 16 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

The admired American mezzo-soprano Beth Clayton should make a strong impression in the title role of **"Carmen,"** a revival of the Jonathan Eaton production in which she shares the stage with a cast that includes Jennifer Black, Scott Piper, and Carlos Archuleta; Joseph Rescigno conducts. (Oct. 10 at 7:30 and Oct. 13 at 8.) ♦ The Dallas Opera's production of **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** takes place in a nineteen-forties Sicilian village filled with colorful types: Santuzza is a black-clad martyr, Lola, a gum-smacking floozy in thick high heels, and Turiddu (an arresting Brandon Jovanovich), a vino-swilling cad demoralized by Italy's downfall. The music buckles under the weight of the director Stephen Lawless's near-farcical humor, but he nails Mascagni's cynicism about the religiosity of this tawdry town. The staging of Leoncavallo's **"Pagliacci"** owes its success to Carl Tanner and Maria Kanyova, who, as Canio and Nedda, portray two reluctant minstrels who give the performance of a lifetime in their unforgettable final scene; George Manahan. (Oct. 11 at 8 and Oct. 13 at 1:30.) ♦ The final performance of **"Don Giovanni,"** with Aaron St. Clair Nicholson (in the title role), Mardi Byers, Julianna Di Giacomo, Bruce Sledge, and Daniel Mobbs; David Wroe. (Oct. 12 at 8.) ♦ The current production of **"Agrippina,"** first seen in 2002, is Handel City Opera-style—nimble, light, and lusty. The wild card is Nelly Miricioiu (making her City Opera début), the Romanian-born British cult soprano who is renowned for her intense characterizations. Also with Heidi Stober, Jennifer Rivera, David Walker, David Korn, Marco Nisticò, and João Fernandez; Ransom Wilson. (Oct. 14 at 1:30 and Oct. 16 at 7:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

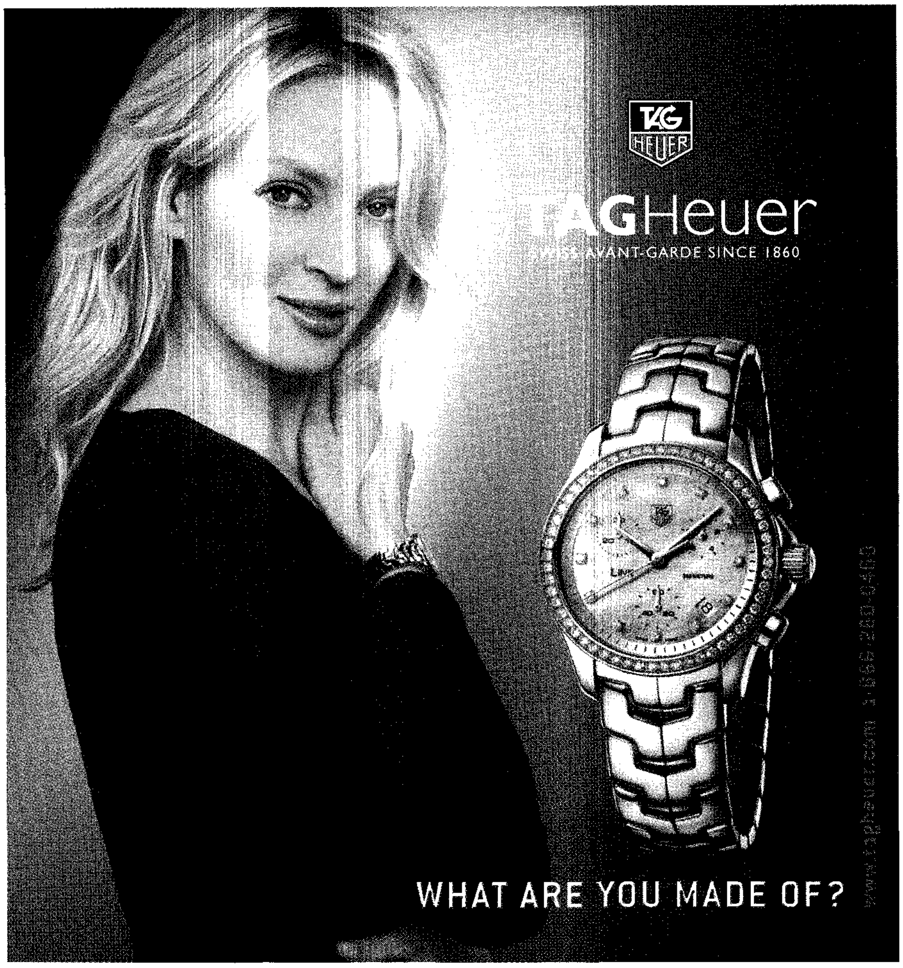
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

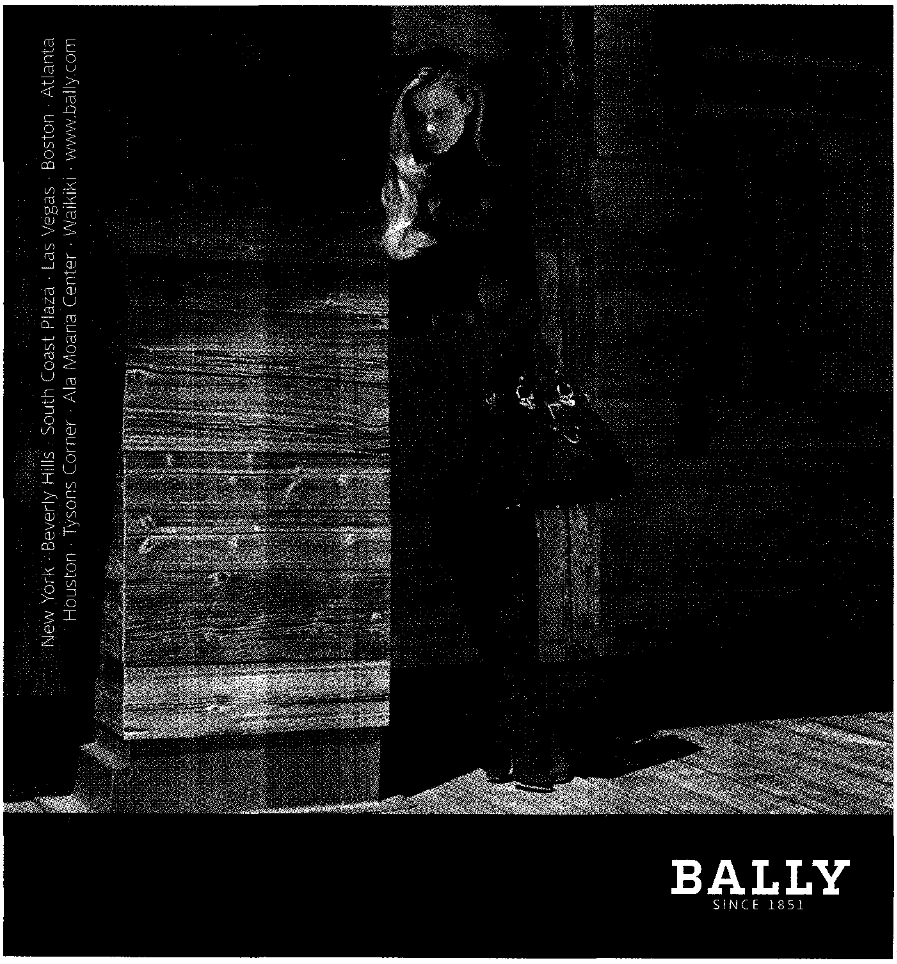
Lorin Maazel and his orchestra wind up their "Tchaikovsky Experience" with a flurry of concerts. In the first program, selections from "Swan Lake" and the emphatic Fifth Symphony bookend a performance of the "Variations on a Rococo Theme" with the young German cellist Johannes Moser, a winner of the Twelfth International Tchaikovsky Competition. (Oct. 10-11 at 7:30.) ♦ A later version of the program substitutes the Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique," for the Fifth. (Oct. 13 at 8.) ♦ Maazel joins the exceptional young conductor Ludovic Morlot in an "Inside the Music" event, hosted by Joseph Horowitz, that will explore the "Pathétique." (Oct. 12 at 8.) ♦ Morlot leads the final program, a "Rush Hour" concert devoted exclusively to the "Pathétique." (Oct. 16 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

FILARMONICA DELLA SCALA

The orchestra of Milan's famed opera house—organized as an independent ensemble by Claudio Abbado—celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a U.S. tour. Riccardo Chailly conducts a program combining German profundity (Wagner's "Wesendonck Lieder" and the aria "Siegmund heiss' Ich," from "Die Walküre," sung by Ben Heppner) and Italian high spirits (Nino Rota's Suite from "La Strada," and Respighi's "Pines of Rome"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 13 at 7.)

JOHN RITTER

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CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
In the first of three concerts at Carnegie Hall, Franz Welser-Möst and his sterling ensemble perform John Adams's "Guide to Strange Places" along with symphonies by Mozart and Tchaikovsky (No. 6, "Pathétique"). (212-247-7800. Oct. 16 at 8.)

RECITALS

ACADEMY OF ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
The Morgan Library and Museum's inviting little concert hall will be graced by this eminent London group, which will perform Dvořák's String Sextet in A Major and the Octets for Strings by Mendelssohn and Shostakovich. (225 Madison Ave. 212-685-0008, ext. 560. Oct. 11 at 7:30.)

TAKÁCS QUARTET
This Anglo-American-Hungarian foursome enjoys a high ranking among the world's chamber ensembles, renowned for its combination of expression, intelligence, and restraint. Haydn, represented by the String Quartet in C Major, Op. 74, No. 1, anchors a concert that also features works by Brahms and Janáček ("Intimate Letters"). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 13 at 7:30.)

"ART OF THE GUITAR": SÉRGIO AND ODAIR ASSAD
One of the great standouts of the 92nd Street Y's music schedule is this unlikely yet indispensable series, which begins this year with these two illustrious brothers, who perform works by Rameau, Scarlatti, Villa-Lobos, Piazzolla, and Jobim. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 13 at 8.)

Ketaki Sheth's photograph "Child Performer, Chowpatty, 1989," at Sepia.

KIRI TE KANAWA
The veteran lyric soprano, rarely heard in New York these days, joins the pianist Warren Jones for a recital featuring not only songs by such composers as Strauss, Duparc, Poulenc, and Copland but also a special appearance by the mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 11 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Oct. 12 at 7: The cellist Zuill Bailey and the pianist Simone Dinnerstein are becoming to the chamber-music set what Netrebko and Villazón are to opera: the "it" duo. Dinnerstein's sober musicianship makes for a nice foil to Bailey's passionate lyricism, a combination they will exhibit in all five of Beethoven's Sonatas for Cello and Piano. ♦ Oct. 13 at 8: Ivan Moravec, a pianist of singular poetry, makes his only New York recital at the Met, offering music by some old friends—Mozart, Debussy ("Estampes" and "Pour le Piano"), and Chopin (a sheaf of Nocturnes, and the Ballade in F Minor). ♦ Oct. 16 at 8: Lars Vogt, a probing young pianist ideally suited to the German repertory, performs works by Mozart, Schubert (the "Drei Klavierstücke," D. 946), and Brahms (the Sonata in F Minor, Op. 5). (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "RUSSIAN ROMANTICS"
With Alice Tully Hall undergoing renovations, the group smooths its transition to the Society for Ethical Culture with a passionate program of works by Arensky, Mussorgsky (the "Songs and Dances of Death," with the rising young Met bass Morris Robinson), and Tchaikovsky (the Piano Trio). (Central Park W. at 64th St. 212-875-5788. Oct. 12 at 7:30 and Oct. 14 at 5.)

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK: "STRAVAGANZA VENEZIANA"
The New York Early Music Celebration rolls on with a concert by Frederick Renz's longtime group, which offers masterpieces of the Venetian Baroque (by Gabrieli, Monteverdi, and others) in a space that rivals San Marco in its grandeur—the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 212-280-0330. Oct. 13 at 8 and Oct. 14 at 3.)

"NEW MUSIC, NEW IRELAND, NEW YORK"
Throughout history, artistic triumph has been the handmaiden of monetary might. The latest concert by the superb Argento Ensemble will show that the Celtic Tiger is no exception when it offers recent works by such Irish masters as Gerald Barry, Donnacha Dennehy, and Ian Wilson (the world première of his Clarinet Concerto). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 14 at 8:30.)

SASHA COOKE
A young mezzo-soprano of exceptional promise (and shades of Janet Baker in her voice) makes her New York recital début at Zankel Hall under the auspices of Young Concert Artists, in a program featuring songs by Poulenc, Barber, Mahler (the "Rückert Lieder"), Rachmaninoff, and John Musto. (212-247-7800. Oct. 16 at 7:30.)

MOVIES OPENING

CANVAS
In this drama, directed by Joseph Greco, children suffer under the strain of their mother's mental illness. Starring Marcia Gay Harden. Opening Oct. 12. (Union Square.)

CONTROL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 10. (Film Forum.)

ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
Cate Blanchett stars as Queen Elizabeth I, in a drama about her attempt to keep the throne despite Mary Stuart's conspiracy. Directed by Shekhar Kapur; co-starring Geoffrey Rush. Opening Oct. 12. (In wide release.)

THE FINAL SEASON
A drama about a man who makes great sacrifices to save a high-school baseball team. Starring Sean Astin; directed by David M. Evans. Opening Oct. 12. (In wide release.)

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Valerie Harper stars as Golda Meir in this adaptation of William Gibson's play, directed by Jeremy Kagan. Opening Oct. 10. (Quad Cinema.)

KHADAK
A fable about a Mongolian shepherd who becomes a shaman. Directed by Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth. In Mongolian. Opening Oct. 12. (Cinema Village.)

KING CORN
A documentary by Aaron Woolf about the crucial role of corn in the fast-food industry. Opening Oct. 12. (Cinema Village.)

LARS AND THE REAL GIRL
Ryan Gosling stars in this comedy, about a young man's relationship with an inflatable doll. Directed by Craig Gillespie; co-starring Emily Mortimer and Patricia Clarkson. Opening Oct. 12. (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

SLEUTH
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 12. (In wide release.)

TERROR'S ADVOCATE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 12. (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

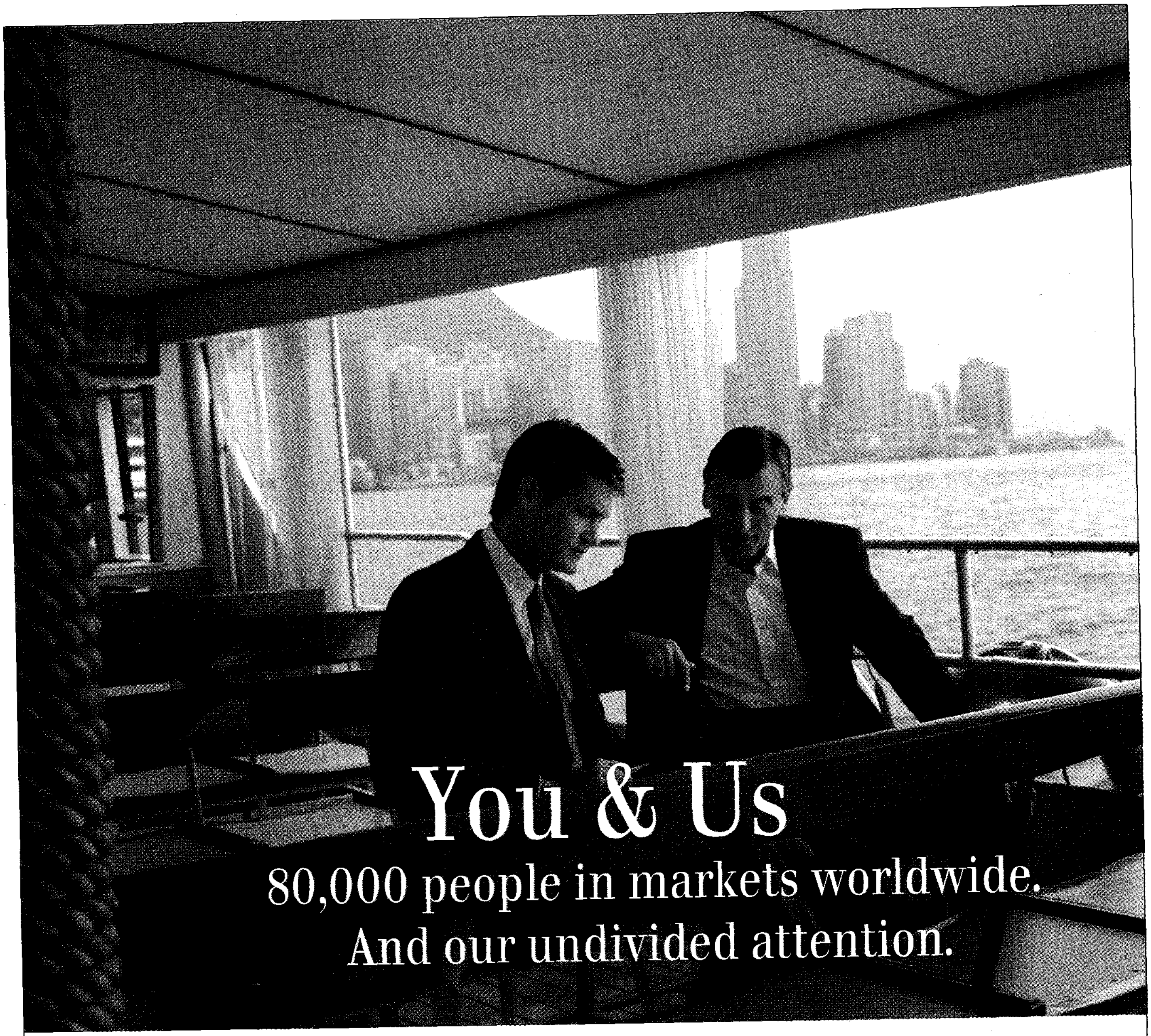
WE OWN THE NIGHT
James Gray directed this crime drama, about two brothers in conflict with the Russian Mob in Brooklyn. Starring Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, Robert Duvall, and Eva Mendes. Opening Oct. 12. (In wide release.)

WHY DID I GET MARRIED?
Tyler Perry stars in and directed an adaptation of his play, about a young woman at a college reunion who must confront her husband's infidelity. Co-starring Janet Jackson and Malik Yoba. Opening Oct. 12. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

ACROSS THE UNIVERSE
Julie Taymor, who staged "The Lion King" and directed a hallucinogenic film version of "Titus Andronicus," lavishes all her visual genius on this overscaled production, which connects almost three dozen Beatles songs with the thinnest thread of a story. Set in the mid-sixties, the film is about an English boy from Liverpool (Jim Sturgess) who moves to Greenwich Village and meets a beautiful, soon to be radicalized girl (Evan Rachel Wood); together with her Vietnam-bound brother, they embark on the trippy adventures of the era. The film is populated with characters named Jude, Lucy, JoJo, Prudence, and Sadie, and the Beatles songs have been reworked (by Elliot Goldenthal and T-Bone Burnett) for the varying degrees of musical talent on display (Bono is fantastic; Eddie Izzard, less so). Because the screenplay is light on dialogue and most of the story is told through the songs, the film never really gets a thorough hold on any of its characters—it's cameo-friendly but emotionally neutered. Still, it's an audacious and creatively risky wonder, with enough visual pizzazz amid the insanity to capture the spirit of those turbulent times.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES BY THE COWARD ROBERT FORD
Seven years ago, Andrew Dominik directed a film called "Chopper," a brisk and alarming account of a career criminal whose infamy has shaded into legend. Now he has done it again—at greater length, with bigger stars, far fewer laughs, and only a frac-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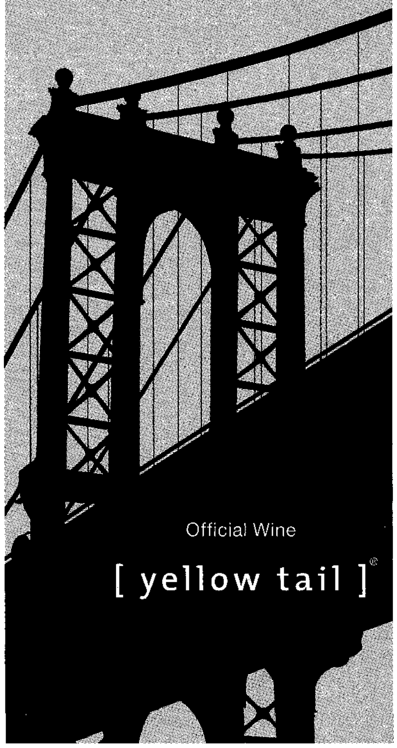


tion of the effect. Brad Pitt plays Jesse James, who is at the tail end of his career and joins up with his brother Frank (Sam Shepard) for one last train robbery, then spends the rest of the story skulking under an alias or settling scores. James also humors his young admirer, Robert Ford (Casey Affleck), who starts off wanting to imitate his hero and ends up killing him. The film concludes with a fascinating, if sketchy, account of Ford's own celebrity, but it can hardly compensate for the sluggish indulgence of the preceding couple of hours. The film dies long before Jesse James does; such liveliness as there is springs from the subplots and bit parts—notably from Paul Schneider as Dick Liddil, a much better Lothario than he was an outlaw. Photographed, to the hilt, by Roger Deakins.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/1/07.) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

THE DARJEELING LIMITED
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

EASTERN PROMISES
The new David Cronenberg film, set among Russian mobsters in London, stars Viggo Mortensen as Nikolai, a part-time chauffeur and full-time threat. He takes care of business for Semyon (Armin Mueller-Stahl), a soft-spoken restaurateur with frightening blue eyes, and Semyon's whining son (Vincent Cassel). Into this murk comes Anna (Naomi Watts), a midwife who is trying to trace the family of an orphaned Russian child. What Cronenberg and his screenwriter, Steve Knight, want to engineer is a collision between worlds that have nothing—no social habits or moral norms—in common. The result, despite the modern setting, is a strangely old-fashioned fable, with a redeeming innocent thrown among evil men. There is no denying the momentum of the story, or Mortensen's shade-wearing composure, but some of the casting (Cassel especially) is askew, and the tone keeps lurching from the sombre into the ghastly as Cronenberg strives to maintain his reputation as a master bloodletter. You may need to look away. With the compelling, cadaverous Donald Sumpter (last seen in "The Constant Gardener") as an English cop.—*A.L.* (9/17/07) (In wide release.)

IN THE VALLEY OF ELAH
The deadpan American hipster Tommy Lee Jones gives the performance of a lifetime in this sombre but fascinating movie, playing a former Army man, Hank Deerfield, whose son, Mike (Jonathan Tucker), after serving in Iraq, has gone AWOL in America. When the young man's body turns up, burned and dismembered, near a base in New Mexico, Hank joins forces with a local police detective (Charlize Theron) to find out what happened. The picture, written and directed by Paul Haggis, is a detailed police procedural encasing a technological and metaphysical lunge at the truth. As Hank looks for Mike's killers, he also tries to interpret the fragmented war scenes that his son recorded on his camera phone. The emotional center is the bond between two generations of warriors—Hank's fear that his son has gone feral, and Mike's anguished attempt to communicate what has happened to him through pictures. The tone of the film is wounded and ambiguous; it's the very opposite of a tearjerker.—*David Denby* (9/24/07) (In limited release.)

INTO THE WILD
Sean Penn wrote and directed this adaptation of Jon Krakauer's chastely written 1996 book about Christopher Johnson McCandless, the Emory University graduate who, at the age of twenty-two, cut all ties with his family and friends, tramped around the country, and then headed north into the wilds of Alaska, where he died, alone, in August, 1992. A single-minded asceticism drove McCandless to his fate; Penn shoots the movie, however, in a facile, commercially lyrical style—he can't stop swirling around mountaintops, as if he were selling S.U.V.s. As the young man (played by Emile Hirsch) travels about, he attracts the interest of a South Dakota wheat farmer (Vince Vaughn, playing it straight), an aging hippie (Catherine Keener), and a retired Army man living on the edge of the California desert (Hal Holbrook), all of whom ask him to put down his backpack and stay. He always leaves, and it may be hard for some of us to take his ambitions as seriously as Penn does. McCandless didn't experience enough of life for his rejection of it to carry much weight, and Penn can't see the egocentricity in a revolt that was as naïve as it was grandly self-destructive.—*D.D.* (10/8/07) (In wide release.)

THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB
A smooth-as-silk adaptation of the best-seller by Karen Joy Fowler, about members of a reading group in Sacramento whose lives mirror the various characters from Jane Austen novels. The writer and director, Robin Swicord, carefully shuffles the romantic problems (unrequited love, loneliness, infidelity) of the film's main characters (played by Emily Blunt, Kathy Baker, Hugh Dancy, and the great Maria Bello, among others) to an orderly, if unsurprising, conclusion. And, while nobody's plight seems insurmountable, the story is presented with such a glossy finish that it's difficult not to be amused by all the Austen-and-the-City reflections.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

KING KONG
This is the tale of one lucky moviemaker. It's got two epic antiheroes: the mythic dinosaur-size ape and the famous jungle-film director patterned after the co-director Merian C. Cooper and played by Robert Armstrong. At the beginning, Armstrong complains about pundits who charge that his movies would have more draw if they contained some romance. So he scours New York City soup lines for a woman needy enough to join his biggest and most mysterious adventure—a secret journey to Skull Island in search of the fabled Kong. Fay Wray turns out to be a plucky leading lady with a powerful set of lungs, and Kong is, if anything, overly coöperative in filling out Armstrong's love story—especially in the restored prints, in which Kong gently strips off Wray's clothing. But like any huge star, the ape is uncontrollable—especially, again, in the unexpurgated version, where he viciously tromps and chomps his victims in closeup. Fortunately, the show-biz frame cushions the bone crushing. You see the action through Armstrong's let's-put-on-a-show eyes, and it becomes a grand excursion into impure movie magic. Directed by Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack; James Creelman and Ruth Rose did the script (from an Edgar Wallace story). With Bruce Cabot as Wray's more conventional leading man. Released in 1933.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Oct. 13.)

THE KINGDOM
After a murderous attack on an American compound in Riyadh, a covert team of F.B.I. agents—Jamie Foxx, Jennifer Garner, Chris Cooper, and Jason Bateman—is flown in, against the wishes of the State Department, to explore the crime. There are severe restrictions on their activities in Saudi Arabia, although, thanks to the cunning of the writer, Matthew Michael Carnahan, and the director, Peter Berg, these are quietly lifted, allowing our heroes to round off the movie in a noisy blaze of firepower. Berg shows his skill at orchestrating these brassy scenes, so much so that you almost forget the absurdities of the plot (was it wise to send a female forensic scientist to a Muslim country?) and almost forgive the hard-nosed vengefulness of the whole enterprise. Wait for the final line: it's clever and loaded, and it makes the movie seem far more poised and pensive than it actually was. With a fine performance by Ashraf Barhom as the Saudi investigator.—*A.L.* (10/1/07) (In wide release.)

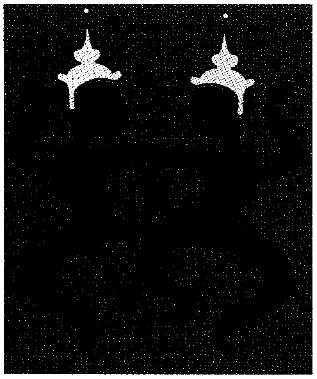
LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN
Gothic psychologizing melodrama, so preposterously full-blown and straight-faced that it's a juicy entertainment. Evil, beautiful Ellen (Gene Tierney) hoards her father's ashes and has a penchant for eliminating people who clutter up her life. There are scenes to cherish: Ellen impassively watching her brother-in-law drown; Ellen flinging herself down a flight of stairs to terminate an annoying pregnancy; Ellen going lickety-split on a charger, tossing Father's remains around the Technicolored New Mexico landscape; Ellen's long-suffering writer-husband (Cornel Wilde) remarking, "When I looked at you, exotic words drifted across the mirror of my mind like clouds

DANIELA SCHÜTT POZZO

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
PHOENIX RISEN

Who knew that Cambodian classical dance had anything in common with "The Magic Flute"? Peter Sellars. He commissioned Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, the director of the Khmer Arts Academy, to create a new version of the opera in honor of Mozart's two-hundred-and-fiftieth birthday, last year. The resulting piece, "Pamina Devi," which will open at the Joyce on Oct. 9, has a new score, for a *pinpeat* ensemble (drums, gongs, etc.), and it is a Cambodian dance-drama. This means that the twenty-two dancers wear costumes that belong in a museum and move very slowly, flexing their lovely fingers like spider chrysanthemums. But the dramatis personae are much the same as Mozart's, and the spirit is similar: sweet and hopeful. At the end, Shapiro's heroine refuses to choose between the Queen of the Night and Sarastro. Instead, she sets off into the unknown, to create a just society. This is clearly a prayer for Cambodia, where, during Pol Pot's regime, an estimated eighty per cent of artists died. Shapiro's company rose from those ashes.

—*Joan Acocella*



across the summer sky." Directed by John M. Stahl. With Jeanne Crain, Vincent Price, Ray Collins, Gene Lockhart, Reed Hadley, Mary Philips, and Chill Wills. Released in 1945.—*Pauline Kael* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 12.)

LUST, CAUTION
The beautiful stone buildings and mahogany interiors of post-colonial Shanghai cast a heavy, voluptuous spell in Ang Lee's adaptation of Eileen Chang's story of sex and espionage in the wartime city. Tang Wei, a former model and a prodigious young actress, plays a member of a political-theatre group that carries its playacting into active resistance to the Japanese occupation. Pretending to be a married sophisticate, the girl enters the circle of Mr. Yee (Tony Leung), a high-placed Chinese collaborator and nemesis of the resistance, and finds herself both attracted to and repelled by him. Ang Lee's staging of the bruising erotic scenes is incomparably powerful, but the meetings and actions of the resistance (presumably under Communist Party discipline) are not very convincing. The movie dawdles and repeats itself unconscionably—it lacks drive and, except for the sex scenes, a tinge of wildness. Shot by Rodrigo Prieto on sets constructed in Shanghai. Wang Hui-Ling and James Schamus wrote the screenplay. In Mandarin.—*D.D.* (In limited release.)

MICHAEL CLAYTON
A gabby, irresistibly entertaining New York thriller. Michael Clayton (George Clooney), a law-firm fixer of dubious ethics, is dispatched to rein in the firm's chief litigator (Tom Wilkinson), a high-strung guy who has discovered a document that incriminates one of the firm's clients and has responded by going off his meds and out of his mind. Michael, it turns out, is only slightly less disgusted by the dirty business than the litigator is, and the movie catches him during a period of four frantic days in which all the strains in his life are pushing him to the breaking point. The screenwriter Tony Gilroy both directed and wrote the movie, and he keeps the tension level high—too high at times; the movie needs to breathe more. Yet the inside-the-law-firm chatter and poker-table badinage come off superbly. Clooney, looking a little haggard, gives a lovely performance as a smart man who has a few too many scruples to be a winner. With Tilda Swinton and Sydney Pollack. Cinematography by Robert Elswit.—*D.D.* (10/8/07) (In wide release.)

SLEUTH
A depressing botch. Harold Pinter's script humorlessly reduces the familiar 1972 mystery gag—about an actor who enters the lair of the writer whose wife he has stolen and gets caught in his trap—to an artificially grim and hopelessly implausible contest of will and game of shifting identities. Jude Law, as the actor, and Michael Caine, as the writer (he played the actor in the original), can do little but chew the overdone high-tech scenery, and the director, Kenneth Branagh, tries to save the day with coy and portentous tricks. A musty scene of Law's ostensibly sinister homosexual vamping suggests that Pinter hasn't gotten out much lately.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

STRANGE CULTURE
Lynn Hershman-Leeson directed this intriguing documentary, about the Buffalo-based artist Steve Kurtz, who was accused of bioterrorism in 2004, when his wife, Hope, died suddenly at the age of forty-five and police, responding to the emergency call, discovered biological materials in his home. In reënactments, Thomas Jay Ryan and Tilda Swinton portray the Kurtzes, who, at the time of Hope's death, were making an art piece addressing the lucrative collusion of the government, science, and industry in the mass production of genetically modified foods. The cops called in the F.B.I.; when Arabic writing (on an invitation to the upcoming art show) was found, along with lab equipment and petri dishes of bacteria (which Kurtz had ordered on the Internet and which he proved were harmless by licking one in front of an agent), he was put in detention. Interviews with the gentle Kurtz himself (who still awaits trial, now only for mail and wire fraud) provide valuable context for this

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study in First Amendment rights, which underscores the confusion, overreaching desperation, and general cluelessness of the government's response to 9/11.—*Shauna Lyon* (Cinema Village.)

TERROR'S ADVOCATE

Barbet Schroeder's fascinating, appalling documentary portrait of the French attorney Jacques Vergès, who enthusiastically represented Klaus Barbie, Carlos the Jackal, and other innocent bystanders, is about much more than one man's delusions. The film traces Vergès's life and work (with his vigorous participation), from the racial discrimination he faced in his youth (his mother was from Vietnam, his father from Réunion) to his first major case, the defense of the Algerian militant Djamila Bouhired, who planted a bomb in an Algiers café in 1956, killing eleven people. Saving Bouhired from the death penalty by mobilizing international sympathy, Vergès then married her and avoided politics until the mid-sixties, when he represented Palestinian terrorists and became a Maoist. Then, after dropping out of sight for a few years, he worked for the Baader-Meinhof gang and other agents of destruction. With probing interviews, intrepid legwork, and sharp editing, Schroeder exposes an underground network that hijacked the anti-colonialist movement from behind the Iron Curtain with the help of unregenerated Nazis and other anti-liberals. With regret, he locates the roots of international terrorism in the ruthless tactics of Algerian independence fighters. The story Schroeder unfolds is not just Vergès's but also his own, that of a generation that had its humanistic sympathies manipulated and abused by radically unscrupulous people with agendas of horror. In French, German, English, Arabic, and Khmer.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

USELESS

In this promotional film commissioned by the fashion designer Ma Ke, the Chinese director Jia Zhangke eludes the genre's constraints to provide an exemplary and beguiling documentary view of inner and outer life in contemporary China. Showcasing Ma's handmade haute-couture line is the pretext for a triptych that begins in the vast and oppressive clothing factories of Guangdong. After viewing laborers in their numbing routines, Jia follows Ma at work in her serene studio and records her insightful meditations on the moral aspect of handicrafts. (A glimpse of her lavish Paris show offers a seemingly obligatory tribute to what Ma calls "the creativity of the Chinese people.") The film concludes with Jia's visit to a coal-mining town in his native Shanxi province, where he speaks with a traditional tailor who has abandoned his needle and thread to work as a miner. Jia's plaintive images suggest the dehumanization that has come with China's industrial revolution and the soul-killing authority on which it depends: a long, poignant shot of laborers squeezing through or climbing over a pointlessly locked gate is a stunning visual metaphor for a society of excessive restrictions in which living normally means breaking the rules. In Mandarin and Shanxi dialect.—*R.B.* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 13.)

Ryan Gosling and a blow-up doll in "Lars and the Real Girl," opening Oct. 12.

HOPE GANGLOFF

Also Playing

BROKEN: Quad Cinema. **FEAST OF LOVE:** In wide release. **THE PRICE OF SUGAR:** Cinema Village. **THE RAPE OF EUROPA:** Angelika Film Center and Paris. **SYDNEY WHITE:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Paper Tiger Television." Oct. 15 at 7: Short films, including "Operation Storm the Media" (1991). ♦ Oct. 15 at 9: "Drawing the Line at Pittston" (1990) and "Who Is Paying the Price?" (2002). ♦ Oct. 16 at 7: "Tompkins Square Park: Operation Class War on the Lower East Side" (1992) and "Thulani Davis Asks, 'Why Howard Beach?': Racial Violence and the Media" (1987). ♦ Oct. 16 at 9: "LGBTSTQ Perspectives," short videos (1999-2002). ♦ "New Zealand: Radical Visions, 1929-2007." Oct. 12 at 8: Short films by Len Lye (1929-1980).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Mikhail Kalatozov. Except where noted, all films are in Russian. Oct. 10 at 7:30 and 9:30 and Oct. 11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Letter Never Sent" (1950). ♦ Oct. 12 at 6:30 and 9:30: "The Red Tent" (1969). The 6:30 screening will be followed by a discussion with the critic Elliott Stein. ♦ Oct. 13-14 at 3, 6, and 9: "I Am Cuba" (1964; in Spanish and English). ♦ "Jonathan Lethem Selects." Oct. 15 at 6 and 9: "High and Low" (1963, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 16 at 6 and 9: "This Sporting Life" (1963, Lindsay Anderson).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Oct. 10-18 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "La Chinoise" (1967, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Oct. 30: "Alexandre Desplat: A Visionary Composer." Oct. 16 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "The Singer" (2006, Xavier Giannoli; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Oct. 12-13: "Wild at Heart" (1990, David Lynch). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Oct. 16 at 7:30: "Obscene" (2007, Daniel O'Connor and Neil Ortenberg).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

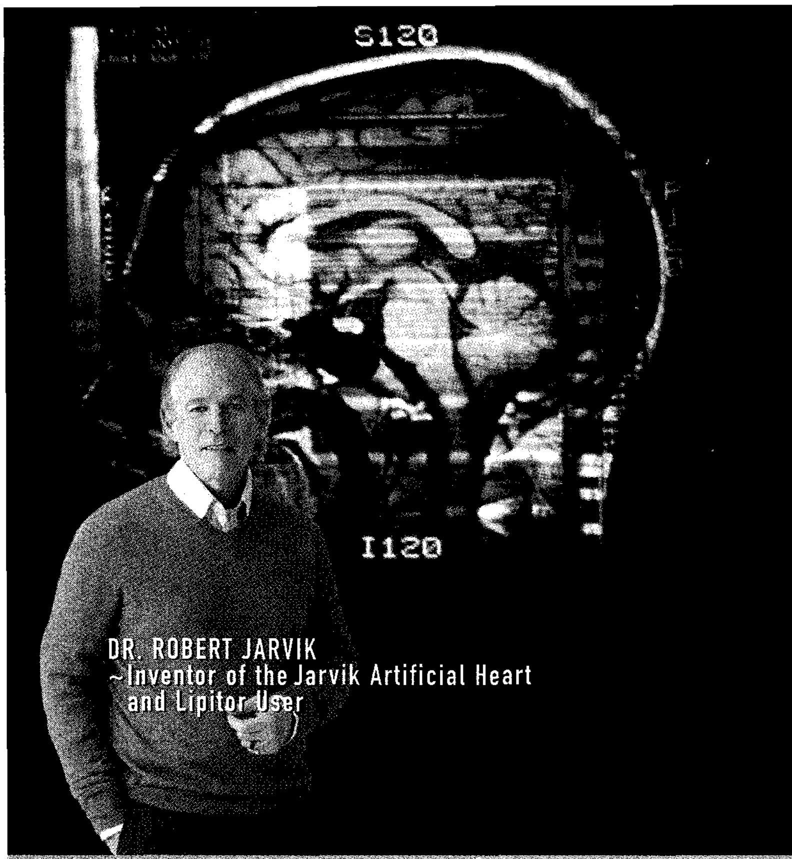
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving," films from the museum's collections. Oct. 10 at 6: "Two Daughters" (1961, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali). ♦ Oct. 10 at 8:30 and Oct. 11 at 6: "A Bill of Divorcement" (1932, George Cukor). ♦ Oct. 14 at 2: "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French, English, German, and Italian). ♦ Oct. 15 at 6: "Hands Up!" (1926, Clarence Badger; silent). ♦ The films of Michael Haneke. Except where noted, all films are in German. Oct. 11 at 6:15 and Oct. 14 at 1: "Three Paths to the Lake" (1976). ♦ Oct. 11 at 8:15: "Variation" (1983). ♦ Oct. 12 at 6:15: "Fraulein" (1986). ♦ Oct. 12 at 8:30: "The Rebellion" (1993). ♦ Oct. 13 at 1:30: "Lemmings, Part 1: Arcadia" (1979). ♦ Oct. 13 at 4: "Lemmings, Part 2: Injuries" (1979). ♦ Oct. 13 at 6:15: "The Seventh Continent" (1989). ♦ Oct. 13 at 8:30: "Code Unknown" (2000; in various languages). ♦ Oct. 14 at 3: "Caché" (2005; in French). ♦ Oct. 14 at 5:30: "The Piano Teacher" (2001; in French). ♦ Oct. 15 at 4:30: "Time of the Wolf" (2003; in French). ♦ Oct. 15 at 7: "Funny Games" (1997), introduced by the director. ♦ "Asian Cinevisions." Oct. 12 at 6:30, Oct. 14 at 5, and Oct. 15 at 8: "The Elephant and the Sea" (2007, Woo Ming Jin; in English and Mandarin). The Oct. 12 screening will be introduced by the writer Dennis Lim. ♦ "In Memoriam: Thierry Kuntzel." Oct. 13 at 2: "La Peinture Cubiste" (1981, Kuntzel and Philippe Grandrieux; in French). ♦ Oct. 13 at 3:15: "King Kong" (†). ♦ Oct. 13 at 5:30: "The Most Dangerous Game" (1932, Irving Pichel and Ernest B. Schoedsack). ♦ Oct. 13 at 7: "La Jetée" (1962, Chris Marker; in French and German) and "Wavelength" (1967, Michael Snow).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Films directed or chosen by Arnaud Desplechin. Oct. 13 at 3: "Kings and Queen" (2004; in French), introduced by Jean-Michel Frodon, the editor of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and the director. ♦ Oct. 13 at 7: "Faces" (1968, John Cassavetes). ♦ Oct. 14 at 3: "La Sentinelle" (1992; in French). ♦ Oct. 14 at 6: "Je T'Aime, Je T'Aime" (1968, Alain Resnais; in French).

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Films are screened at a variety of theatres; for program information, visit www.filmlinc.com. Oct. 10 at 6 and Oct. 11 at 9: "Redacted" (2007, Brian De Palma). ♦ Oct. 10 at 7 and Oct. 14 at 6:15: "Mambo Girl" (1957, Yi Wen; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 10 at 8:45: "I Just Didn't Do It" (2007, Masayuki Suo; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 10 at 9 and Oct. 15 at 2: "Our Dream Car" (1959, Yi; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 11 at 5 and Oct. 14 at 8:15: "Sister Long Legs" (1960, Tang Huang; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 11 at 6 and Oct. 13 at 10 A.M.: "Actresses" (2007, Valéria Bruni Tedeschi; in French). ♦ Oct. 11 at 7 and Oct. 13 at 4:30: "The Wild, Wild Rose" (1960, Wong Tin-Lam; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 12 at 6 and Oct. 13 at 12:45: "Before the Devil Knows You're Dead" (2007, Sidney Lumet). ♦ Oct. 12 at 6:30: "Drums Along the Mohawk" (1939, John Ford). ♦ Oct. 12 at 9 and Oct. 13 at 6:30: "A Girl Cut in Two" (2007, Claude Chabrol; in French). ♦ Oct. 12 at 9: "Leave Her to Heaven" (†). ♦ Oct. 13 at 2 and 9:30: "The Other Side of the Mirror: Bob Dylan Live at the Newport Folk Festival, 1963-1965" (2007, Murray Lerner). ♦ Oct. 13 at 3:45: "Useless" (†). ♦ Oct. 13 at 9:30 and midnight: "Mr. Warmth, the Don Rickles Project" (2007, John Landis). ♦ Oct. 14 at 1: "Calle Santa Fe" (2007, Carmen Castillo; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 14 at 1:30: "Runnin' Down a Dream: Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers" (2007, Peter Bogdanovich). ♦ Oct. 14 at 8:30: "Persepolis" (2007, Marjane Sa-



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trapi and Vincent Paronnaud; in French, English, Persian, and German). ♦ Oct. 16 at noon and 6:45: "Sun, Moon and Star" (1961, Yi; in Mandarin).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Oct. 12 at 9:15: "Shaolin Temple" (1982, Xinyan Zhang; in Mandarin), with a discussion and slide show by the photographer Justin Guariglia and the playwright David Henry Hwang.

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"John Sayles's Personal Choice." Oct. 14 at 7:30: "Sawdust and Tinsel" (1951, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Oct. 16 at 7:30: "Sweet Smell of Success" (1957, Alexander Mackendrick).

READINGS AND TALKS

"SELECTED SHORTS"
The series featuring actors reading short stories gets under way for the season with an appearance by Stephen King, who will host an evening of material from "The Best American Short Stories 2007," which he guest-edited. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 10 at 7:30.)

"THE CRITIC AND THE CANON"
The writers Paul Berman, Gary Giddins, Wendy Lesser, Jed Perl, and Joan Acocella, the dance critic for this magazine, discuss the legacy of Edmund Wilson. The Wilson biographer Lewis M. Dabney is the moderator. (Cantor Film Center, New York University, 36 E. 8th St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 11 at 6:30.)

POETS HOUSE
Elaine Equi and Aram Saroyan contemplate the minimalist poetry of E. E. Cummings, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Gertrude Stein, and others. (72 Spring St., 2nd fl. 212-431-7920. Oct. 11 at 7.)

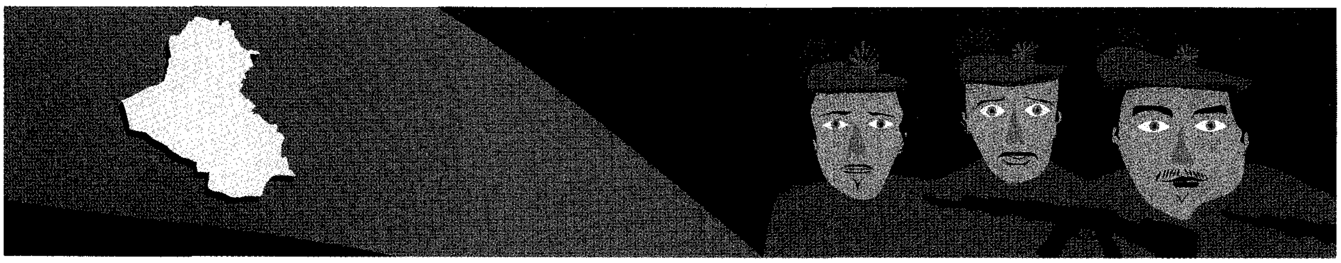
LINCOLN KIRSTEIN CENTENNIAL
Martin Duberman, the author of "The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein," Lorrie Goldensohn, the editor of "American War Poetry: An Anthology," Nicholas Jenkins, the editor of "By With To & From: A Lincoln Kirstein Reader," and Edward Mendelson, the editor of "W. H. Auden: Collected Poems," honor the poet and impresario, who died in 1996. (The Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 212-254-9628. Oct. 12 at 7.)

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA
The Peruvian novelist kicks off the new season of evening readings at Queens College. (LeFrak Concert Hall, the Music Building, Flushing. For more information, visit www.qc.edu/readings. Oct. 16 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"DR. SKETCHY'S ANTI-ART SCHOOL"
Molly Crabapple, a young local artist with a flair for sexy, retro-looking illustrations, runs this biweekly drawing and social event at the Lucky Cat Lounge, in Williamsburg. In her drawing sessions, a burlesque performer replaces the traditional demure artist's model, there are chances to win prizes in lighthearted contests, and drinks are for sale. On Oct. 13, she ups the ante by inviting characters from the high-concept performance-monster troupe Kaiju Big Battel. The radioactive sea urchin Unibouzu and other similarly imaginative creations are expected. (245 Grand St., between Driggs Ave. and Roebling St. For more information, visit www.drsketchy.com.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Christie's holds two jewelry auctions on Oct. 16, a large one—which includes an exquisite Art Nouveau diamond-sapphire-and-enamel brooch by Boucheron in the shape of a bumblebee, with wonderfully opalescent wings—followed in the afternoon by a smaller one devoted to a private collection. These are preceded by a sale of English furniture and ceramics (Oct. 11), as well as the first of the house's biannual auctions of musical instruments (Oct. 12), featuring a large selection of guitars and a Guarneri violin from 1720. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** sales of English decorative art (Oct. 12-13) are crowned by a fabulously ornate George III silver centerpiece from 1786, topped by a reclining Neptune with his trident. "Metamorphosis," a painstakingly crafted photographic sculpture by the modernist photographer Herbert Bayer, headlines a small but exquisite auction of photographs from the collection of Nancy Richardson, held on the second day of Sotheby's photography sales (Oct. 15-16). The house is also hosting an exhibition (beginning Oct. 15) devoted to the life of Grace Kelly, a.k.a. Princess Grace of Monaco, sponsored by the Monegasque royal family and consulate general and featuring dresses, photographs, and jewelry that once belonged to the glamorous star of "Rear Window" and "To Catch a Thief." (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ A sixteen-volume set of Edward S. Curtis's "The North American Indian"—expected to bring approximately a million dollars—is the highlight of a sale of photographs from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at **Swann** on Oct. 15. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



The Scottish war drama "Black Watch," at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn.

SAM FRIEDMAN

ON THE HORIZON

DANCE
POINT COUNTERPOINT
Oct. 17-21

Christopher Wheeldon's transatlantic ballet company, Morphoses, based in New York and London, will have its much talked about inaugural season at City Center. The ensemble—including Wendy Whelan (Wheeldon's muse), Darcey Bussell (who recently retired from the Royal Ballet), and Anastasia Yatsenko (of the Bolshoi)—will perform works by Wheeldon, William Forsythe, and Edwaard Liang, among others. (212-581-1212.)

THE THEATRE
SCOTLAND'S FINEST
Oct. 20-Nov. 11

St. Ann's Warehouse presents National Theatre of Scotland's production of "Black Watch"; Gregory Burke's drama offers an intimate look at the experiences of several members of the Scottish regiment that was deployed to Iraq in 2004. John Tiffany directs. (718-254-8779.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LADIES' NIGHT
Nov. 4-17

In one of the last blasts of Americana before the Gerard Mortier regime takes over at City Opera, Lauren Flanigan sings the title role of Samuel Barber's elegant melodrama, "Vanessa," which was created by Eleanor Steber at the Met in 1958. (212-721-6500.)

ART
WORD UP
Nov. 15-Feb. 10, 2008

Since 1968, the conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner has been using his words: painting texts on walls, casting them on manhole covers—even etching them into the sides of buildings. "As Far As the Eye Can See," his first retrospective in the U.S., opens next month at the Whitney Museum. (800-944-8639.)

NIGHT LIFE
ONE WORLD
Nov. 16

The idealistic and inclusive multi-faith concert "Songs of the Spirit" brings Hugh Masekela, Odetta, Craig Harris, the Tibetan Monks of the Drepung Loseling Monastery, Frank London and Lorin Sklamberg (of the Klezmatics), and other musicians to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (866-468-7619.)

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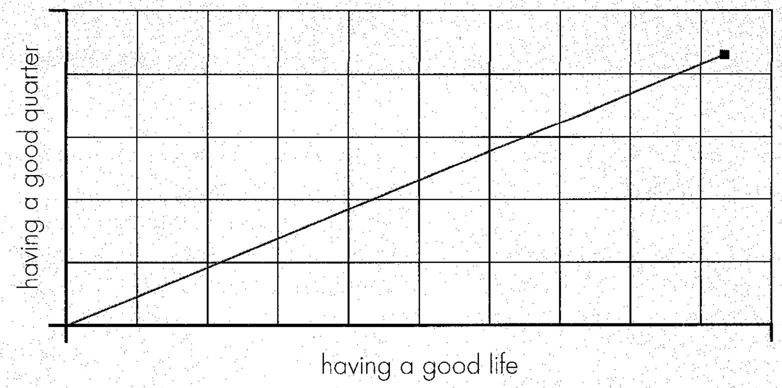
HAVING YOUR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
BROUHAHAHA

Q: What don't we know about your spouse?
A: She has the world's best laugh.
—Interview with Bill Clinton, Time.com, September 13, 2007.

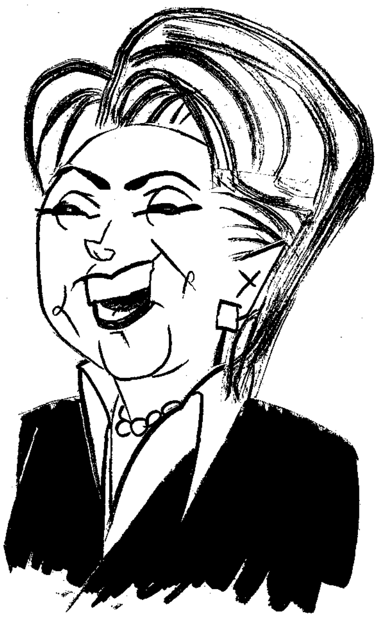
In the great American tradition of Washington's teeth, Lincoln's Adam's apple, T.R.'s pince-nez, Nixon's five-o'-clock shadow, Ike's grin, Reagan's pompadour, and—more recently, less nostalgically—Gore's sigh, Dean's scream, and W.'s smirk, the small (but, thanks to the Internet, bigger than ever) universe of people who professionally or semi-professionally obsess about Presidential campaigns has been agog over Hillary Clinton's laugh.

This momentous subject began to elbow aside scarier topics like Iraq on September 23rd, when the junior senator from New York got herself interviewed on all five of the Sunday-morning political variety shows, a feat known as "the full Ginsburg," in honor of William Ginsburg, Monica Lewinsky's lawyer, who, on February 1, 1998, was the first to manage it. The Ginsburg may not be Clinton's favorite trophy, but she persevered. She met the press, she faced the nation, she rode down the fox. And, sure enough, whenever George or Wolf or Tim asked her something that struck her a certain way, she laughed.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The sound of Hillary's laughter, accompanied by urgent analyses thereof, has since been echoing from the tar pits of the Internet to the lofty peaks of the major mainstream media. It began with surprising amiability, on none other than "Fox News Sunday," just after that program's contribution to the Ginsburg. Chatting with the interviewer, Chris Wallace, about the way Clinton had burst out laughing at the opening question (which was about why she has "a hyper-partisan view of politics"), Wallace's colleague Brit Hume remarked that her laugh "is always disarming, always engaging, and always attractive."

By midafternoon, the Republican National Committee had rushed out a corrective to Hume's lapse into graciousness: an electronic "research briefing" titled "Hillary: No Laughing Matter." It was studded with subheads like "When Asked Whether Her Plan Is a Step Toward Socialized Medicine, Hillary Giggles Uncontrollably" and festooned with video clips of the former First Lady engaged in giggle-related activities. From then on, the commentary alternated between judgments of the quality of the candidate's laughter and assessments of its hidden meaning.



Media Matters, the indefatigable Web site that chronicles conservative broadcasting, kept track. Sean Hannity played an audio clip seven times and described the candidate's laughter as "frightening." Bill O'Reilly trotted out a Fox News "body-language expert" to pronounce the laughter "evil." Dick Morris, the onetime Clinton adviser turned full-time Clinton trasher, described it as "loud, inappropriate, and mirthless." Further down the evolutionary scale, the right-wing blogs bloomed like a staph infection. "Shrillary's" laugh is "chilling." It's "fakey fake fake fake." It's a "hideous hyena mating call." It's "a signal to launch her flying monkeys."

The respectables joined in, too, in their mannerly way. In the *Times*, Frank Rich wrote, "Now Mrs. Clinton is erupting in a laugh with all the spontaneity of an alarm clock buzzer." His Op-Ed partner Maureen Dowd wrote that Clinton's "big belly laughs" were a way of making the transition "from nag to wag." Meanwhile, in the news section, a story explored the question "What's Behind the Laugh?" And *The Politico*, a new online political newspaper, identified the problem as "a laugh that sounded like it was programmed by computer."

How a given laugh sounds is, of course, a matter of personal taste. More than two dozen videos of Hillary laughing are available on YouTube, some of them edited so as to make her appear ridiculous or hysterical, and after repeated viewings one observer—this observer, actually—has concluded that she is in fact laughing. That is to say, she is responding in a more or less normal fashion to a comment or situation that she perceives as absurd or humorous. (As Jon Stewart, the well-known humor expert, noted in the course of his own riff on the Clinton laugh situation, being called hyper-partisan by Fox News is, to borrow his word, "funny.") Hillary's laugh is unusually uninhibited for a politician—especially, perhaps, for a female politician. It is indeed a belly laugh, if not a "big belly" laugh, and it compares favorably with the incumbent Presidential laugh, a series of rapid "heh-hehs," at once threatening and insipid, accompanied by an exaggerated, arrhythmic bouncing of head and shoulders in opposite directions.

The just published "Journals: 1952-2000" of the late Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., may shed some light on the question of whether Hillary Clinton is the sort of person who is capable of genuine laughter and, by extension, of the humanness that laughter is taken to signify. With reservations, Schlesinger liked the Clintons. But you don't have to take his word for it; you can take Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's. Schlesinger's entry for February 4, 1993:

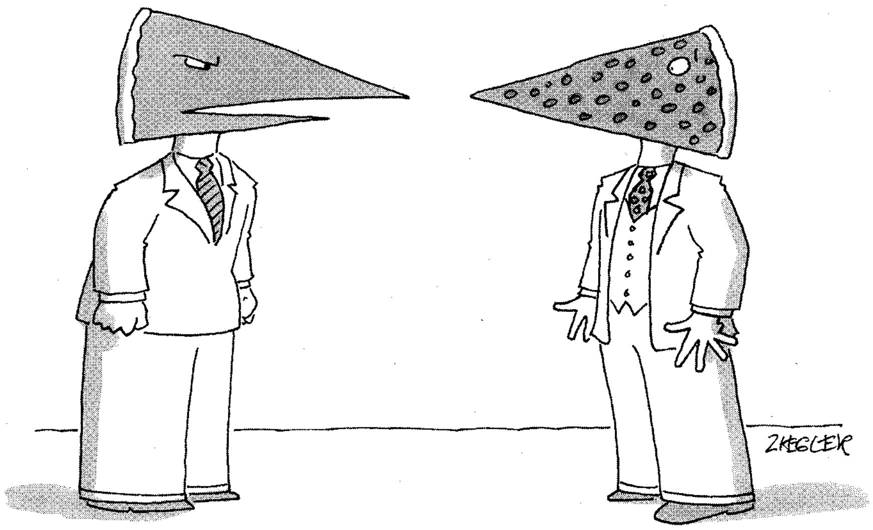
> Last night we dined at the [McGeorge] Bundys'. Jackie was also there. I asked her about Hillary Clinton. She could not have been more enthusiastic—so intelligent, so pretty, so cozy, what a good sense of humor. This last item surprised me. I was ready to concede the first two adjectives and even the third, but I supposed her to be somewhat on the stern and humorless side.

In later entries, Schlesinger writes of Hillary's "charm and humor" and her "infectious joie de vivre." But it must be said that she doesn't always laugh, even when something's funny. In 1998, at the height of the Full Monica, Schlesinger, then eighty-one years old, is seated next to the First Lady at a formal White House dinner celebrating the National Humanities Medals, one of which he has just been awarded. They're having a jolly, dishy time—she's "very easy to talk to"—when Arthur gets a little too expansive:

> I made the point that the liberals had stood by Clinton while the DLC [Democratic Leadership Council] people had deserted him and described the miserable [Senator Joseph I.] Lieberman as a "sanctimonious prick." Hillary said, "Well, he is certainly sanctimonious," but showed no eagerness to pursue this line of thought.

Speaking of which, or whom, if people want to find fault with Senator Clinton, there are juicier bones to pick than her funny bone. A week or so ago, for example, she was the only Democrat in the Presidential race to support a Lieberman-sponsored resolution putting the Senate on record as urging the Bush Administration to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a foreign terrorist organization. Her fellow-candidate senators—Joseph Biden, Christopher Dodd, and Barack Obama—opposed it, not because they doubt that the Guard dabbles in terrorism but because they don't trust the Administration not to treat the resolution as a green light for another war. A few days later, Clinton did a course correction, signing on to a bill, sponsored by James Webb, of Virginia, that would bar funding for military action against Iran without explicit congressional authorization. Complain about her triangulation if you wish, but our unhappy country needs all the laughs it can get.

—Hendrik Hertzberg



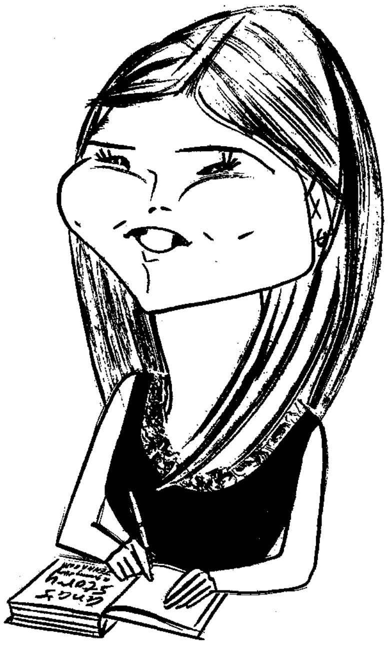
"The pepperoni, Wilson—get rid of it!"

INK
FIRST BOOK

Jane Friedman, the president and C.E.O. of HarperCollins, got a call from her friend Robert Barnett, the lawyer in Washington, D.C., last January. He said, "Jenna Bush is doing a book," and offered to arrange a meeting. Friedman was curious, if skeptical. "I mean, when Jenna and her sister were young girls we all read the same stories," she said the other day, while blinking suggestively and fiddling with her scarf. HarperCollins has just published "Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope," based on the first daughter's internship with UNICEF, in Latin America—a surprising turn of events, given Jenna's previous image as the girl voted Most Likely to Trip on Prom Night, and known for her boozy run-ins with law enforcement. "From what I gather, she's a very facile writer," Friedman added.

Do not be put off by the fact that "Ana's Story" has a hundred and two chapters. Some are only forty or fifty words long, and the entire book can be read in the course of a day's commute. The subject matter is grim and raw, and unlikely to please Jenna's Gammie, Barbara Bush, any more than the twins' standup routine at the Republican National Convention, in 2004. Ana (a pseudonym) is an H.I.V.-infected teen who inherited the condition from her mother, was repeatedly molested by her grandmother's boyfriend, and has unprotected sex—once—with another H.I.V.-infected teen and becomes pregnant.

The book has a spare, verging-on-hardboiled prose style (" 'How did your parents die?' Ana asked. 'They were sick," Berto said. 'Mine, too.' "), and suggests that Jenna may yet have a future following Margaret Truman and Susan Ford into the mystery-novel genre. She has a weakness for dubious ethnic analogies: "His eyes were wild, like those of the pumas that lived in the jungles," and "A nurse wrapped Beatriz in a blanket—like a burrito." Still, as Nils Kastberg, UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Jenna's old boss, said, "It's a million times better than the many memorandums that we write."



Jenna Bush

The New York launch party took place last week at UNICEF House, on East Forty-fourth Street, and as Laura and the twins arrived paparazzi began calling for Barbara—the brunette, the Yale graduate—to turn and smile. "*Jenna's* the author," someone finally corrected. Jenna was dressed in a slim-fitting black shirt-and-skirt combo, putting to rest the shotgun-wedding rumors that have spread since her engagement, in August, to Henry Hager. Mia Baxter, a classmate of Jenna's at the University of Texas, and the photographer for "Ana's Story," stood by her side. "We met when we were fifteen, in a study-abroad program in Spain," Baxter said.

Downstairs, young men and women in pleated khakis and cocktail dresses assembled with UNICEF staffers—a merging of Jenna's past and present—to watch a video, narrated by Jenna. ("Some kids live in places where poverty or violence or natural disasters make it difficult to even get the basics.") "I'm fascinated," one UNICEF employee said. "I haven't seen a group like this assembled in this room. It looks like a college sorority." The author wiped an occasional tear throughout various toasts ("Jenna, on behalf of all the children in the world, we thank you"), and rose at last to speak herself. "If you don't have a glass of wine and you want one, you should get one, because it's a party," she said, drawing a laugh. "No, really, go back to the bar and get one."

Clay Aiken, the "American Idol" star, and now a UNICEF ambassador, was hiding in a corner. "I read it on the plane to Afghanistan," he said of the book. "I was quite impressed. I remember thinking she must have had a ghostwriter, but she didn't. She did it herself." (Even the First Lady, during her toast, conceded the unlikeliness of her daughter's literary début: "A lot of my friends have asked, 'Would you ever have expected that Jenna, at age twenty-five, would write this book?' ")

Meanwhile, by the bar, a couple of young Bush friends, Kyser and Steven, were waiting for caipirinhas. Steven was from Texas. "I'm really popular," he said. "I know most of the people here."

"Typical asshole Texan," Kyser said. "I'm from Memphis."

The issue of writing and drinking—together—came up. "A lot of writers get their views from the bottle," Steven said.

"I wouldn't recommend more than three of these," Kaiser said, pointing to his newly full glass. "Metaphors come out like crazy."

—*Ben McGrath*

THE BOARDS
MONSTER CAREER

1959: Guy walks into a bar in Greenwich Village. Spies a friend, Tom Meehan, a twenty-seven-year-old staff writer for this magazine. Guy tells Meehan he's just come from a party where the actresses Uta Hagen and Ina Claire happened to be present.

Three years later, Meehan wakes up one morning with an idea: "Uta . . . Ina . . . Hmm." He compiles a list of euphoniously named luminaries: Ava Gardner, Yma Sumac, Oona O'Neill, Abba Eban, Ida Lupino, Aga Khan, Eva Gabor, etc. The result, "Yma Dream," an instant-classic piece of short fiction, is published in *The New Yorker*, February 24, 1962.

Another nine years pass. Meehan gets a call from Martin Charnin, who is directing a television special starring Anne Bancroft. An "Yma Dream" admirer, Bancroft wants Meehan to adapt it as a comedy sketch, which he proceeds to do. Along the way, he becomes friendly with Bancroft's two-thousand-year-old husband, Mel Brooks, who asks Meehan if he'd ever like to collaborate on a movie. Meehan replies, "Yes!"

Then, for a decade, nothing (unless you count Meehan's writing the book and winning a Tony Award for the Charnin-directed mega-boffo Broadway musical "Annie"). Finally, Brooks follows up on the invitation, and asks Meehan to co-write, with Ronny Graham, the screenplay for "To Be or Not to Be," a remake of the 1942 Ernst Lubitsch comedy. Four years later—it's now 1987—they do "Spaceballs." The next Brooks-Meehan enterprise, the musical adaptation of "The Producers," opens in 2001, runs for six years, and wins more Tony Awards than any play in history, including Meehan's second for best book of a musical. He wins his third, in 2003, for co-writing the book of "Hairspray" with Mark O'Donnell.

One recent afternoon, Meehan sat in the dark of the orchestra section of the Hilton Theatre during a technical rehearsal for "Young Frankenstein," the latest Brooks-Meehan collaboration, which opens next month. Onstage, Roger Bart, playing Dr. Frederick Frankenstein (the Gene Wilder role in the 1974 movie), grandson of the creator of the eponymous monster, and Sutton Foster, as the comely Inga (originally Teri Garr), were descending, candle in hand, the cellar steps of the Transylvanian castle once inhabited by the first Dr. Frankenstein. Brooks was in California for a few days, which, apparently, was just as well.

"Mel doesn't particularly enjoy this part of the process," said Meehan, a nonseptuagenarian-looking seventy-five-year-old with a drooping mustache and a manner that is as self-effacing as Brooks's is boisterous.

Describing the onstage action, he said, "This is an example of a scene from the movie that we just picked up and put in the script. There's really only one other significant lift, the blind-hermit scene in Act II. The trick of the play is to retain the spirit of the original movie and some of the iconic lines while essentially making it a whole new thing. We did that with 'The Producers,' too, but this has been more difficult, because it's not naturally a musical. This movie is so well known. To me, it's always been Mel's best, since it was a true parody. He'd carefully studied the old James Whale version of 'Frankenstein,' from the early thirties, and was able to recreate the sets. What this has in common with 'The Producers' is that they're musical comedies. But this is more like a mock-gothic opera."

An opera, that is, with lines like Frau Blücher's description of the manly attributes of her departed lover, Herr Doktor Frankenstein: "He won the three-legged race. All by himself."

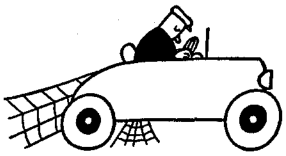
"I wrote that line," Meehan said. "Well, Mel wrote it. The process is we sit and talk. I take notes on a yellow legal pad. We go back and forth. We have the original movie script and we just riff off it."

At five o'clock, the cast and crew took a dinner break, which gave Meehan time for a trip around the block, to the rehearsals for "Cry-Baby"—yet another musical adaptation (after "Hairspray") of a John Waters film, and another book-writing collaboration between Meehan and O'Donnell. "This is the first time I've ever had this happen—two shows opening at once," he said. "So I have to shift gears stylistically." Also, logistically. Meehan has two other musical adaptations in the works, and next spring a production of the opera "1984" (music by Lorin Maazel, libretto by Meehan and the poet J. D. McClatchy) opens at La Scala, in Milan.

"I grew up on James Thurber, S. J. Perelman—they were my gods," he said. "When I started writing, I was trying to do it in that vein. I realized that there are long-distance runners and there are sprinters. I thought I didn't have the stamina, or the soul or whatever, of a novelist or even a playwright. So I wrote short things. But when I worked on 'Annie' I was guided by some kind of instinct, and afterwards I realized, 'Oh, I did that right.' Now I know what I'm doing and I can do it. Here in the twilight, I just knock them out."

—*Mark Singer*

FIELD STUDIES
IDLE HANDS



If you go to school in Bushwick, Brooklyn, you may have noticed, alongside the cotton-candy sellers and the babysitters who gather on the curb around 3 P.M., several academic-looking women making notes on clipboards. The clipboards are covered with voter-registration stickers, though if you ask the women about voting, or anything else—where the lunchroom is, when the third graders get out—you'll be met with blank stares and a vague answer: "We're not with the school" or "We're studying the air."

The women belong to a nonprofit group called the Asthma Free School Zone, which, for the past year, has been holding covert stakeouts of schools around the city to aid a campaign against vehicle idling. New York City prohibits idling for spurts of longer than three minutes (the fine is from three hundred and fifty to two thousand dollars), though the law is rarely enforced. In 2004, after receiving a tip from the A.F.S.Z., Eliot Spitzer, who was the attorney general at the time, sued several school-bus companies for breaking the rule, and last month, as governor, Spitzer signed a ban on all bus idling in school zones. "In Switzerland you have to turn your engine off if you're more than four cars behind the stoplight," Rebecca Kalin, the group's founder, said the other day. "Idling is rude there. It's like burping—you just don't do it."

Kalin had arrived at P.S. 274 a little before two o'clock, with three colleagues: Lori Bukiewicz, a public-health worker; Jen Richmond-Bryant, an assistant professor at Hunter College (courses: Ventilation, Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality); and Bin-Yun Zheng, the group's assistant. When no one was looking, they wheeled out a small gray cabinet with a plastic tube sticking out of the top. The cabinet emitted a low buzzing noise, and it contained a car battery, two Sidepaks—used to gauge air quality by counting small particles called $PM_{2.5}$—and an instrument called an Aethelometer, which measures black carbon. They attached an additional Sidepak to the belt of Desiree Maldonado, a crossing guard and an accomplice. "My role is wearing this gadget for as long as I'm out here," Maldonado said, pointing to the device on her hip, which was blue and vibrating. She breathed in. "I'm so used to the air here, I can't even tell you if it's polluted. I know I get sick a lot. I used to sing high soprano, and I can't anymore. This job has ruined my vocal cords."

As school let out, Bukiewicz and Richmond-Bryant recorded the traffic patterns by making hash marks that denoted the type of passing vehicle (short bus, long bus, truck, car) and whether the light was red or green. Zheng kept track of idling. (Kalin: "It's like the saying about pornography: you know it when you see it.") At two-thirty-three, a green Honda pulled up to the curb. Two girls wearing school uniforms got out while the driver stayed at the wheel.

"There's one right there," Kalin whispered. "See? He's still got his taillights on."

A few minutes later, the girls skipped back into view, holding hot dogs. Zheng made a note under "Comments": "Hot-dog purchase for kids." The Honda continued to idle, and Kalin inhaled deeply. "You smell it? The fumes?"

Shortly before three o'clock, there was a car accident—someone crashed into a Dumpster down the block and drove off—and a man ran into the street waving a hubcap. "Lotta action in Brooklyn," Kalin said, but her attention was fixed on a nearby Lincoln Town Car, which had stopped near the curb. Kalin wandered over to the car and, looking straight ahead, pretended to steady herself while rubbing her hand over the hood. "It looks like it's not idling," she said when she returned. "Sometimes you have to just touch the engine." In an hour and a half, there had been twelve idlers: seven cars, one truck, and four school buses. The $PM_{2.5}$ reading was on the high side.

After three weeks of monitoring the air quality around the school, the group will begin a public-awareness campaign. (The mayor's office will roll out a similar campaign in 2008.) "We'll be out here with flyers and metal signs that say, 'Idling Gets You Nowhere,' " Bukiewicz said. "We'll hold parent- and teacher-training classes. We'll go gangbusters on them."

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

DEPT. OF 9 TO 5
STRESSBUSTER

When an American businessman calls upon a guru of the Eastern persuasion, he is generally seeking to be abused for his attachment to success and worldly goods while also learning how to acquire more of both. Swami Parthasarathy, eighty years old, a native of Chennai, India, having renounced a lucrative career in the family shipping business and the Rolls-Royce that came with it, and founded the Vedanta Corporate Academy two hours southeast of Mumbai, has a deep understanding of this delicate role. In the past, he has harangued and soothed supplicants at Microsoft, Ford, and Lehman Brothers, and has been invited by the deans of Kellogg and Wharton to instruct M.B.A. students in the use of the Sanskrit Vedas for purposes of serenity and profit. On a recent visit to New York, he appeared at "21" to instruct members of the Young Presidents' Organization (to join, you must be younger than forty-five and run a business) in the management of self and stress.

"After that traffic, he's gonna help us relax, right?" one young president, wearing an open-necked blue shirt and a blazer, said as he waited for the elevator.

"I hope he makes us think," a female young president in a white trouser suit replied. "Not relax, but the opposite."

The meeting took place in a room upstairs whose walls were lined with ornate beer steins. The Swami was introduced by a female acolyte in a silver-and-white shalwar kameez, who informed the audience that Parthasarathy still followed a regular regimen of yoga, jogging, and cricket, and noted that "Swamiji's corporate seminars are always a sellout."

The Swami himself, wearing a white cotton dhoti kurta, walked to the podium and regarded his audience for a moment in silence.

"Stress!" he declared in a dramatic undertone, his hands clutching the lectern. The room hushed; the Young Presidents chewed their roast beef very quietly.

"Stress is entirely an internal phenomenon!" Parthasarathy shouted. "You are the architect of your fortune, you are the architect of your misfortune. Don't blame the stars! Blame yourself! A man goes to his lawyer to divorce his wife and says, 'What's the fee?' 'Five thousand dollars.' 'How long it takes?' 'Six months.' 'I pay you ten thousand dollars, you make it three months.' Another man is desperately waiting to marry the same lady! What's this? The lady is the same who produces agony to one and ecstasy to another! Therefore I put it to you for your consideration: stress is in you. Period."

The Swami said he would not offer them solutions to stress—he would speak only of its origin. "You go to a friend's house, there's a peculiar foul smell," he said. "You ask your friend, 'Look here, what's happening, there's a funny smell.' The friend rushes to get some fresheners and starts spraying all over the place. And you say, 'Look here, I'm only telling you there's a funny smell.' So the second time he gets some perfume and dabs it on you. The third time you pick up a curtain and there's a decomposed rat. Now I ask you, do I need to give solutions?"

Parthasarathy is a pioneer in the field of what has been called "karma capitalism." Hindu philosophy is now widely discussed in business schools, but few students of the Bhagavad Gita can match Parthasarathy's peculiar charm—his blend of spiritual admonishment and Catskills-style compassion.

"Once you make the right assessment, then you have the right expectations and you have no disappointments," he told the Young Presidents. "My wife is an irritable person. Fifty-two years of marriage, still going strong. I decide to live with her, but I must understand that she has a short temper. First thing I get up in the morning, I ask her, 'Darling, will you get me a cup of tea?' 'I'm not a servant—go get your own cup of tea.' If she says that, I know I'm in the right house, she's my wife. You have to have proper assessment!"

The crux of the Swami's message was that stress derives from unreasonable expectations—for a wife who isn't irritable, say, or three hundred million dollars—and attachment to what one has. "As long as there is attachment, there is misery," he said. "Somebody scratches your new Seven Series BMW, you're attached. You start a family, you're attached."

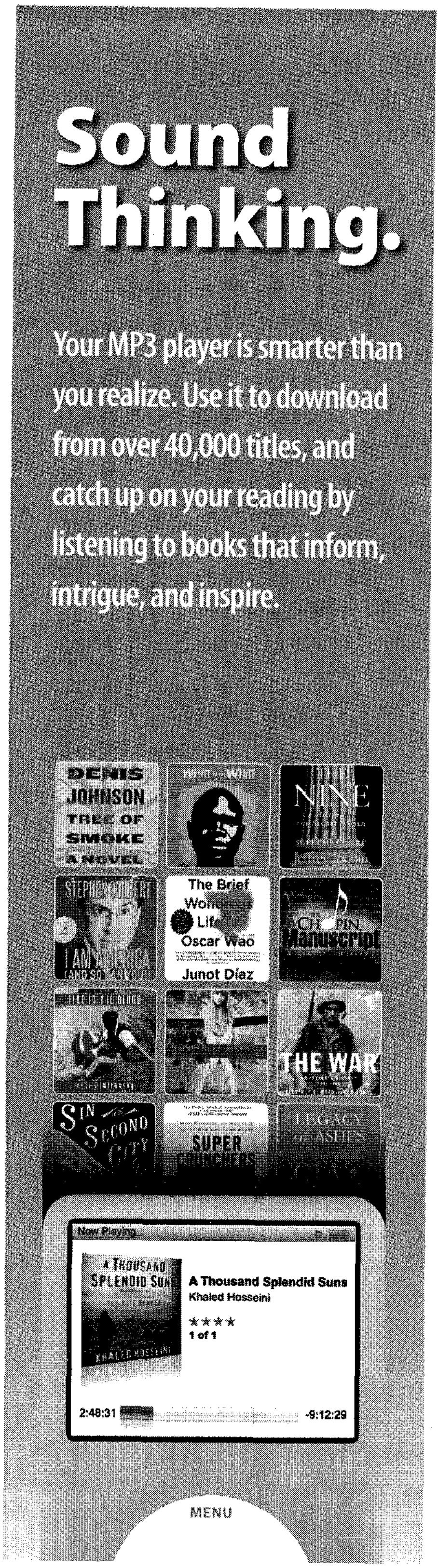
During a question-and-answer period, these ideas met with resistance.

"How do you manage your expectations when you want to shoot for the stars with your business?" a man in the back of the room wanted to know.

"How do you combine being in a marriage for fifty-two years with a lack of attachment?" a woman asked.

Parthasarathy stuck to his message. "You don't know how to handle your partner, you don't know how to handle your children, you don't know how to handle society!" he proclaimed as he warmed up to his conclusion. "You hit the pillow, if you don't fall asleep in twenty seconds there's something wrong with you! At the end of the day you need a Scotch-and-soda. At the end of the week you need a weekend. At the end of the year you need a vacation. Why you guys need weekends and vacations? In the academy that I'm running, in the three-year course there are no breaks for weekends and vacations. Why you need a break? You believe that work tires you, but work can never tire you! I want to change T.G.I.F. to T.G.I.M. If you don't find peace and happiness in action, you'll never find it!"

—*Larissa MacFarquhar*



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MEDICAL DISPATCH

SILENT MINDS

What scanning techniques are revealing about vegetative patients.

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

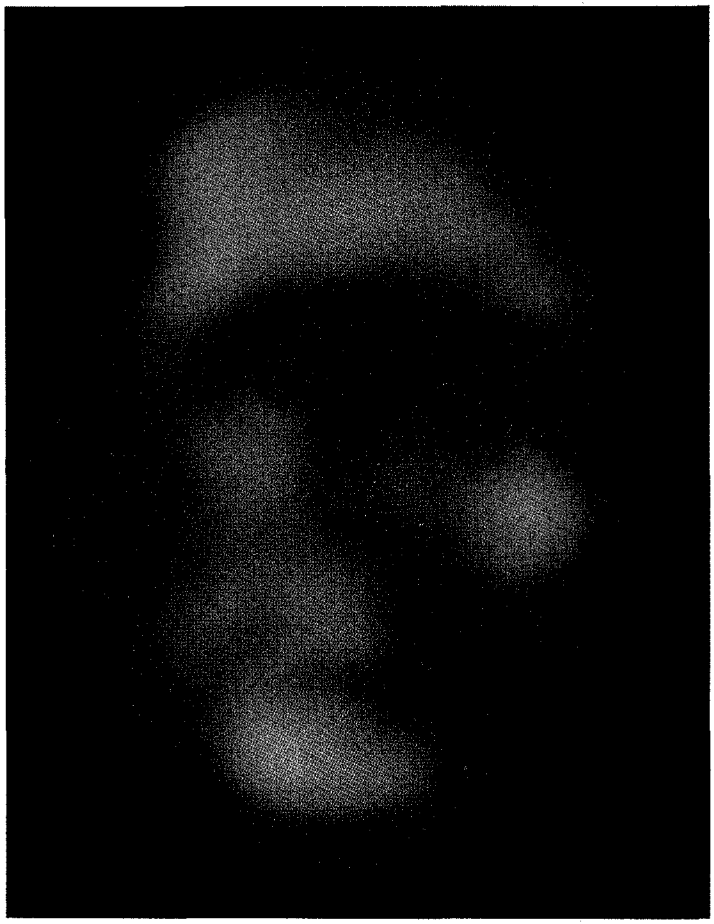
Ten years ago, Adrian Owen, a young British neuroscientist, was working at a brain-imaging center at Addenbrooke's Hospital, at the University of Cambridge. He had recently returned from the Montreal Neurological Institute, where he used advanced scanning technology to map areas of the brain, including those involved in recognizing human faces, and he was eager to continue his research. The imaging center was next to the hospital's neurological intensive-care unit, and Owen heard about a patient there named Kate Bainbridge, a twenty-six-year-old schoolteacher who had become comatose after a flulike illness, and was eventually diagnosed as being in what neurologists call a vegetative state. Owen decided to scan Bainbridge's brain. "We were looking for interesting patients to study," he told me. "She was the first vegetative patient I came across."

For four months, Bainbridge had not spoken or responded to her family or her doctors, although her eyes were often open and roving. (A person in a coma appears to be asleep and is unaware of even painful stimulation; a person in a vegetative state has periods of wakefulness but shows no awareness of her environment and does not make purposeful movements.) Owen placed Bainbridge in a PET scanner, a machine that records changes in metabolism and blood flow in the brain, and, on a screen in front of her, projected photographs of faces belonging to members of her family, as well as digitally distorted images, in which the faces were unrecognizable. Whenever pictures of Bainbridge's family flashed on the screen, an area of her brain called the fusiform gyrus, which neuroscientists had identified as playing a central role in face recognition, lit up on the scan. "We were stunned," Owen told me. "The fusiform-gyrus activation in her brain was not simply similar to normal; it was exactly the same as normal volunteers'."

Excited by this result, Owen resolved to try to conduct brain scans of other vegetative patients in the Cambridge area. Since 1997, he has studied several dozen people, though he decided to use speech sounds rather than photographs to stimulate their brains. (Owen was concerned that showing images of faces might not be a reliable way to test recognition, since the eyes of vegetative patients often wander. "We shifted to auditory responses because you can always put a pair of headphones on the person and know that you are transmitting sound," he said.) Three years ago, he began using a functional MRI (fMRI) scanner, which is faster than a PET scanner, capturing changes in blood flow in the brain almost as they occur. The patients' brains were scanned while they listened to a recording of simple sentences interspersed with meaningless "noise sounds." The scans of some of the patients showed the same response to the sentences as scans of healthy volunteers, but Owen wasn't sure that the patients had understood the words. "So we went the next step up the cognitive ladder, to look at comprehension," he said.

Psycholinguists have shown that when we hear a noun at the beginning of a sentence we tend to associate the word with its most common meaning. For example, Owen said, most people hearing a sentence that begins, "The shell was . . ." think of an object typically found at the beach. But if the sentence is completed by the phrase "fired at the tank," the listener quickly corrects himself, a process that is evident on a brain scan. "You can actually see it happening and image it on the scanner," Owen said. "The beautiful thing about the psychological task is that we just do it automatically. When you play ambiguous sentences, areas in the inferior frontal lobe and in the posterior temporal lobe become activated, and these areas are very important for speech comprehension. They show that you understand the meaning of the word: it's not just about perceiving speech; it's about decoding. Your brain somehow appreciates that there are two meanings to a word like 'shell.'"

Owen eventually identified two vegetative patients whose brains showed the same activity in response to ambiguous sentences as the brains of healthy volunteers. He also took brain scans of healthy physicians, who were presented with the ambiguous sentences while under general anesthesia. Owen found that, as the effects of the anesthesia increased, the physicians showed less activity in the brain regions associated with comprehension. "That, of course, is in keeping with our personal experience of consciousness, which is that as you sort of drift into sleep you understand less and less of what is around you," he said. (An article about this experiment appears this week in *PNAS*, the journal of the National Academy of Sciences.)


Brain scans showed one patient was able to imagine playing tennis.

BILL ARMSTRONG, "APPARITION #906" (2005)/CLAMP ART

Owen's final experiment was the most ambitious: a test to determine whether vegetative patients who seemed able to comprehend speech could also perform a complex mental task on command. He decided to ask them to imagine playing tennis. ("We chose sports, and tried to find one that involved a lot of upper-body movements and not too much running around," he said.) First, he took brain scans of thirty-four healthy volunteers who were instructed to picture themselves playing the game for at least thirty seconds. Their brains showed activity in a region of the cerebrum that would be stimulated in an actual match. "This was an extremely robust activation, and it wasn't difficult to tell whether somebody was imagining tennis or not," Owen said. He then repeated the experiment using one of the vegetative patients, a woman who had been severely injured in a car accident. The woman had to be able to hear and understand Owen's instructions, retrieve a memory of tennis—including a conception of forehand and backhand and how the ball and the racquet meet—and focus her attention for at least thirty seconds. To Owen's astonishment, she passed the test. "Lo and behold, she produced a beautiful activation, indistinguishable from those of the group of normal volunteers," he said. (Another vegetative patient, a man in his twenties, also passed the test, though Owen, having learned that the man was a soccer fan, asked him to imagine playing that sport instead of tennis.)

In September, 2006, Owen, along with Martin Coleman, a neuroscientist at Addenbrooke's, and four other researchers, published an article about the tennis experiment in *Science* and ignited a vigorous debate. In letters to the journal, some neurologists argued that the woman must have been misdiagnosed—a claim that Owen disputed. "She fulfilled all of the internationally agreed-upon criteria, and there wasn't anything that she did that would lead anybody to say she wasn't vegetative," he told me. "Now, naturally, in hindsight she wasn't vegetative; she was actually conscious. It's a very interesting issue, because it means that she was in fact misdiagnosed, but not misdiagnosed in the sense that somebody made an error. Clearly, she is consciously aware of things around her. So something is missing in the diagnostic criteria."

For decades, doctors assumed that patients who have been diagnosed as vegetative lack any capacity for conscious thought. Most are previously healthy people who suffered a traumatic brain injury, or oxygen deprivation after a heart attack or stroke, and have been regarded more or less as zombies: patients whose bodies continue to function—sometimes for decades—but whose minds are incapable of willed activity. (The term "vegetative" was proposed in 1972, by Bryan Jennett, a neurosurgeon, and Fred Plum, a neurologist, who chose it based on a definition in the O.E.D: "an organic body capable of growth and development but devoid of sensation and thought.") In the occasional newspaper stories about someone who suddenly recovered consciousness after spending years in a vegetative state, the event was invariably described as a medically inexplicable "miracle." The Mohonk Report, a paper prepared by a group of experts in brain injury and presented to Congress last year, cited estimates suggesting that there are approximately thirty-five thousand Americans in a vegetative state and another two hundred and eighty thousand in a minimally conscious state—a less severe condition, in which patients show erratic evidence of deliberate behavior, such as responding to a simple command or focussing on a person or an object for a sustained period. Because insurers typically won't pay for rehabili-

"It gets a lot of refracted light."

• •

tation, on the assumption that such patients are unlikely to improve, most are given little in the way of therapy. "These people with brain trauma are out of our view," Joseph Fins, an internist and medical ethicist at Weill Cornell Medical College, in Manhattan, and a member of the Mohonk group, told me. "We ignore them, and we sequester them in places where we can't see them, usually in nursing homes."

According to several American and British studies completed in the late nineties, patients suffering from what is known as "disorders of consciousness" are misdiagnosed between fifteen and forty-three per cent of the time. Physicians, who have traditionally relied on bedside evaluations to make diagnoses, sometimes misinterpret patients' behavior, mistaking smiling, grunting, grimacing, crying, or moaning as evidence of consciousness. A neuroscientist showed me a video on the Internet of Terri Schiavo, the Florida woman who spent fifteen years in what most doctors agree was a vegetative state—tests revealed almost no activity in her cortex—and whose death, in 2005, provoked fierce debate over the rights of severely brain-damaged patients. (Schiavo died after the Supreme Court rejected her parents' appeal of a judge's decision approving her husband's request that her feeding tube be removed. An autopsy showed extensive brain damage.) In the video, a man's voice can be heard praising Schiavo for opening her eyes in response to his instructions, and the neuroscientist told me that he was impressed until he muted the sound. "With the sound off, it is clear that her movements are random," the neuroscientist said. "But, with the voice-over, it is easy to make a misdiagnosis." (The prognosis for patients such as Schiavo, who suffered brain damage owing to oxygen deprivation following cardiac arrest, is much worse than for those who suffer brain damage as the result of a head injury.)

Doctors can also miss signs of consciousness in vegetative patients, according to the British and American studies. Ten months after Owen and his colleagues completed the tennis experiment with the vegetative woman, she was brought back to the imaging center and placed in an MRI machine. "We were absolutely dismayed, because we scanned her and there was nothing," Owen recalled. The team tested the woman again the next day. This time, in response to a command to play tennis, her brain showed normal activity in the regions that mediate arm movements. Owen now repeats scans for each patient, conducting them twice a day for three days. Patients with brain injuries have "seriously impaired attention capabilities and their levels of general arousal are likely to be shot," he said. Recent research by Owen and other neuroscientists may eventually help make diagnoses more accurate, but it is not yet clear how the new brain-scan data will affect the medical understanding of consciousness. As Owen put it, "The thought of coma, vegetative state, and other disorders of consciousness troubles us all, because it awakens the old terror of being buried alive. Can any of these patients think, feel, or understand those around them? And, if so, what does this tell us about the nature of consciousness itself?"

Owen's article in *Science* was accompanied by an editorial by Lionel Naccache, a neurologist at the Hôpital Pitié-Salpêtrière, in Paris, who called the results of the tennis experiment "spectacular." "Despite the patient's very poor behavioral status, the fMRI findings indicate the existence of a rich mental life, including auditory language processing and the ability to perform mental imagery tasks," Naccache wrote. Yet he cautioned against drawing general conclusions about vegetative patients from a single case, and asked, "If this patient is actually conscious, why wouldn't she be able to engage in intentional motor acts, given that she had not suffered functional or structural lesion of the motor pathways?" Prompted by questions like this, Naccache and several of his colleagues are conducting brain-imaging experiments with the goal of identifying objective indicators of consciousness, and thus enabling doctors to better evaluate patients who are unable to communicate their awareness of themselves or their environment.

We assimilate information unconsciously all the time; at any given moment, we process thousands of stimuli, of which we pay attention to only a few. As you read this sentence, you may not be aware of the birds singing in the back yard, but your brain has analyzed the sound and concluded that it poses no threat to you. In the past several decades, scientists have uncovered particularly dramatic examples of unconscious processing. In the early seventies, researchers at M.I.T. studied four patients who had experienced trauma to an area of the brain involved in vision and had been found to have a condition that was later called "blindsight." These patients' eyes functioned normally, but they did not perceive much of what was in their field of vision. When the researchers flashed a light at the patients and asked them to describe what they saw, the patients reported that they had seen nothing. Yet the researchers noticed that their eyes often located the source of the light. In a second experiment, a blindsight patient was shown pictures of faces displaying happiness, sadness, anger, and fear. The patient said that he could not see the faces, yet he was frequently able to correctly identify the emotions. The researchers concluded that, despite the patient's injuries, pathways in his brain had been preserved which allowed him to process at least some visual data, even though he wasn't consciously aware of doing so.

In the early nineteen-hundreds, the Austrian neurologist Hermann Zingerle described patients who, because of tumors or other abnormalities of the parietal lobe on the right side of the brain, ignored the left side of the body and objects in the left field of vision. (The right side of the brain controls awareness of the left side of the body.) For example, some of these patients would shave only the right side of their faces, since they were unaware of their left cheeks. In the nineteen-eighties, researchers determined that patients who had the syndrome—now called "neglect"—could process some objects in the left field of vision. In one experiment, a patient was shown two pictures of a house. The images were identical except that, in one, flames were emerging from a window on the left side of the façade. The patient said that she couldn't see any difference between the images, but, when she was asked which house she would want to occupy, she almost always chose the one that was not on fire. "This is more complex than blindsight, because it means that the patient was unconsciously able to interpret and understand the symbolic meaning of the pictures," Naccache said. "It is a powerful experiment to demonstrate that unconscious perception and unconscious cognition can reach upper levels of the brain."

From these and other recent experiments, including his own, Naccache and his research team are developing a working medical definition of consciousness. "When we are conscious, the key property is our ability to report to ourselves or to others the content of the representation—as when I say, for example, 'I am perceiving a flower,' or the fact that I am conscious of speaking with you now on the telephone," Naccache told me. "You have patients who are conscious, or who are able to make reports, but you can prove that some stimuli escaped their conscious reports, as in the case of blindsight or neglect. You can study the neural fate of these representations by showing that, even if the stimuli were not reported by the subject, they were still processed in the brain." He added that, in the case of Owen's vegetative patient who imagined playing tennis, it's impossible to know whether she reported the event to herself—which would suggest that she is capable of conscious thought—or whether, as in the case of the blindsight and neglect patients, she had no subjective awareness of the experience. However, Naccache believes that consciousness also requires an ability to sustain a representation over time, which Owen's patient clearly was able to do. "In assessing apparently vegetative patients who are unable to speak, and thus report, the direction of research should be to look for sustained representation," he said. "If we can prove by neuroimaging techniques that this person is able to actively maintain a given representation during tens of seconds, it provides strong evidence of conscious processing."

Naccache has recently incorporated a third neurological feature into his definition of consciousness: broadcasting. In a person who is conscious, he explained, information entering the brain is processed in a few areas and then distributed—or broadcast—to many others. "It's as though there is a kind of ignition in the brain, and then information is made available to a very rich number of regions," Naccache told me. "And that makes sense, that the information is initially represented locally and then made available to a vast network, because the person has this ability to maintain the representation within the network for a long time."

In 2005, Naccache conducted an experiment whose outcome suggested the importance of broadcasting as a marker of consciousness. First, he and his research team presented a series of words to three epileptic patients, who had had electrodes implanted temporarily in various brain regions, in an effort to locate the source of their seizures. The electrodes enabled doctors to record the activity in a given region. Some of the words, such as "blood" and "rape," were chosen for their negative emotional connotations. The rest of the words, which included "chair" and "house," were considered neutral. Each word was shown to the patients for twenty-nine milliseconds and then replaced with an image of a geometric figure, such as a rectangle. The patients reported seeing only the geometric figures. However, Naccache's team discovered that in each patient the amygdala, a brain structure that is associated with strong negative emotions, such as fear, displayed much more activity in response to the negative words than to the neutral words.

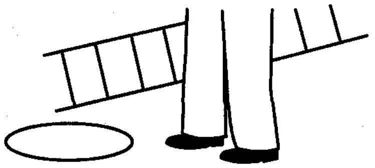
"The picture we have now is that, unconsciously, many areas of the brain can process information, and that unconscious representation can be very abstract and very rich—much more than neuroscientists thought some decades ago," Naccache said. "But now we can begin to identify some limits of unconscious cognition. The activation picked up by the electrodes is not only evanescent but restricted to the amygdala and a few other regions, without broadcasting and amplification through the brain." Owen's tennis-playing patient may have been broadcasting information during the experiment, Naccache said, though he added that he is uncertain whether her diagnosis should be upgraded from vegetative to minimally conscious. Moreover, he said, brain-scan research cannot yet tell us much about such a patient's prospects for improvement.

The J.F.K. Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, in Edison, New Jersey, is among the world's largest centers for the treatment of brain injuries and one of the few places where patients suffering from disorders of consciousness participate in research studies and receive innovative therapy. In 2002, Joseph Giacino, a neuropsychologist at the institute, was the co-chair of the Aspen Work Group—which was made up of experts in brain injury—and helped formulate the criteria for diagnosing a minimally conscious state. "I think the rehabilitation field was ahead of the curve in understanding that there were subpopulations of patients who were not in a coma, were not in a vegetative state, but really were not conscious, at least in the way we think about normal consciousness," Giacino told me. "In the medical literature, these patients were lumped together with everybody else."

The techniques that Giacino uses to diagnose patients require no sophisticated technology. He recalled making rounds at the institute with two eminent neurologists and stopping at the bedside of a woman who had had a brain hemorrhage. The neurologists examined the woman, who lay with her eyes half closed and did not respond to the doctors' commands. The neurologists concluded that she was in a vegetative state. "So I sort of sheepishly said, 'Let me show you what happens when we stimulate her,' " Giacino recalled. He had been using a technique called "deep-pressure stimulation," which involves squeezing a patient's muscles with force and precision. Giacino started with the woman's face and worked his way down to her toes, pinching her muscles between his fingers. As he explained, the nerve endings of the muscles send impulses to the brain stem, which relays them to other brain structures and rouses the patient to consciousness. "I did a cycle of deep-pressure stimulation, and within a minute or so she was talking to us," Giacino said. "The neurologists were flabbergasted." The woman was able to say her name and her husband's name, and answer simple questions, such as "Is there a cup at your bedside?" After a few minutes, however, she became unresponsive again.

The woman had what Giacino calls a "drive disorder," in which a patient is unable to speak, move, or, possibly, think unless physically stimulated—by touch. Doctors believe that such disorders are caused by damage to the limbic lobes or to other parts of the brain that trigger and sustain behavioral responses. Some patients with drive disorders respond to drugs that increase brain levels of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that is associated with arousal. "Imagine if the woman were in a nursing home," Giacino said. "Somebody would stop by for three minutes, check her bedpan, and present simple commands like 'Squeeze my hand,' 'Close your eyes,' and 'Open your mouth.' She is not going to do any of those things, but she clearly had a significant amount of preserved function. It had to be harnessed externally." At J.F.K. Johnson, patients with drive disorders receive behavioral and drug therapy. (Some patients improve, but prospects for recovery are largely determined by the extent and nature of the damage to the drive system.)

Since 2002, the institute has been experimenting with using brain scans to assist with diagnoses. Giacino cited the case of a male patient whose condition had been diagnosed as vegetative but who appeared to have strong emotional responses to people around him. "If a nurse came in to do his care, it looked like he was screaming silently," Giacino recalled. "His mouth would be wide open, and he had an agonized, contorted face, like the one in Edvard Munch's painting 'The Scream.' The expression would occur if there was a lot of noise around him, or if he was being physically handled, but then his mother would come into the room, lower the lights, talk with him in a soothing voice, and it would just go away." When doctors scanned the man's brain, they discovered that portions of the right hemisphere involved in emotional processing were intact. (Other parts of the right hemisphere were damaged.) "This shows you how treacherous diagnostic assessment can be," Giacino said. "One can retain one piece of a network but be disconnected from other structures and other networks, so that there is almost no subjective awareness associated with this complex behavior. I've seen other patients with other behaviors that seem to be outside the scope of a vegetative state. Then you image them and you find out some circuits are still relatively preserved, while most of the rest of the brain is not."



However, brain-scan technology has also helped doctors identify one patient at J.F.K. Johnson as a candidate for an experimental therapy. The patient, a thirty-eight-year-old man who suffered a head injury and had been living in a nursing home for six years, arrived at the institute in 2004. He appeared to be minimally conscious; he occasionally mouthed single words when prompted, but he was unable to respond reliably to simple questions, or to chew and swallow. (He had a feeding tube.) In 2001, PET and fMRI scans had been taken of the man's brain, and, according to Giacino, one of many researchers involved in the case, "the findings were totally unexpected. The PET scan showed little metabolic activity, but the fMRI scan showed that the region of the cortex involved in processing language functioned in a fairly normal way." The researchers speculated that, because of damage to the man's frontal lobe, thalamus, and brain stem—areas involved in regulating arousal—the nerve signals in his brain were muted. As Nicholas Schiff, a neurologist at Weill Cornell Medical College who led the study of the man's brain, put it, "It's as if a radio were turned to such a low volume that you couldn't hear the music distinctly." He added, "The scans confirmed our expectation that this patient had a greater capacity for language than he demonstrated."

In August, Schiff, Giacino, Joseph Fins, and Ali Rezai, a neurosurgeon at the Cleveland Clinic, along with twelve other researchers, published an article about the case in *Nature*. The researchers described implanting electrodes in the man's thalamus, which, by stimulating the brain tissue, had enabled him to regain considerable physical and mental function. "Deep brain stimulation can promote significant late functional recovery from severe traumatic brain injury," they wrote. When the electrodes were turned on in the man's thalamus, his speech improved, his movements became more fluid, and he was able to chew and swallow. When the researchers turned off the electrical stimulation, the man soon relapsed. He is now being given regular doses of electrical stimulation and is able to speak in short sentences and to chew and swallow. The researchers concluded that the case "challenges the existing practice of early treatment discontinuation" for minimally conscious patients who show some "interactive behaviors."

Few vegetative or minimally conscious patients ever recover fully, and many are unlikely to improve. (Some neurologists estimate that an adult who has been vegetative for six months following a traumatic brain injury has only a twenty-per-cent chance of regaining consciousness.) For the past three years, Schiff and Fins have been studying the brain of Terry Wallis, a forty-three-year-old man in rural Arkansas who had been the subject of national news stories in 2003, when it was reported that he had begun to speak after spending nineteen years in a nursing home, in a minimally conscious state. Schiff and Fins contacted Wallis's family and offered to help him obtain medical care during his recovery, and to use brain scans to document his progress. In 1984, Wallis, a nineteen-year-old truck mechanic, had been in a car accident and sustained a severe brain injury; he was also paralyzed. Wallis's father had asked the nursing home to arrange an evaluation of his son by a neurologist, but was told that such an assessment was too expensive and, in any case, would not be useful. In 2003, when Wallis began to speak, he received twelve weeks of physical therapy, which was covered by Medicaid, but the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services rejected his request for further treatment, concluding that he had not made sufficient progress. One day, in 2005, Fins, who had contacted Wallis's congressman to solicit his help in obtaining additional medical care for Wallis, asked Mrs. Wallis for her son's Social Security number. "I was on the phone, and Mrs. Wallis said to Terry, 'What's your Social Security number?' " Fins recalled. "He gives his number, and I write it down. And I said, 'Mrs. Wallis, was that Terry?' And she said, 'Yup. The first time he told us his Social Security, we thought he was wrong. But we looked it up, and he was right.' "

Fins was astonished. Not only has Wallis recovered memories from his life before the accident but, Fins said, "he is picking up American culture. He now knows the song 'Bad boys, bad boys, what are you gonna do.' Why is that important? It's important because that song didn't exist in 1984, so Terry is laying down new memories. It shows sustained improvement." In 2006, Schiff arranged for Wallis to be taken to Weill Cornell Medical College, where he examined his brain using a sophisticated technique called diffusion tensor imaging, which assesses the number and health of axons, long fibres that transmit nerve impulses from one brain cell to another. The scans suggested that the axons in Wallis's brain were growing and forming new connections—a finding that contradicts the long-standing assumption that a damaged brain is incapable of healing after such a lengthy period. "We need to do longitudinal studies, to see if these kinds of changes are accruing over time, whether they happen frequently or infrequently, and what their association with the patient's level of function is," Schiff told me. In some cases, he speculated, the brain may sometimes be able to bypass an injured area and devise novel ways of connecting axons. Still, he went on, much about Wallis's recovery—and the neurological developments that are driving it—remains a mystery. "After nineteen years, Terry spoke a few words, but within seventy-two hours he recovered fluent, expressive, and receptive language," Schiff said.

Kate Bainbridge, the first vegetative patient that Adrian Owen studied in Cambridge, has also made considerable progress, recovering the use of her arms, and much of her mental function, although she is unable to walk. She still has difficulty talking, and uses a letter board to communicate with people who are not used to her speech. "Most scans show what is wrong with your brain, which doctors need to know," Bainbridge wrote to me in an e-mail. "But Adrian Owen's scans show what is working. I say they found parts of my brain were working. It really scares me to think what might have happened to me if I had not had the scans. They show people it was worth carrying on even though my body was unresponsive." ♦

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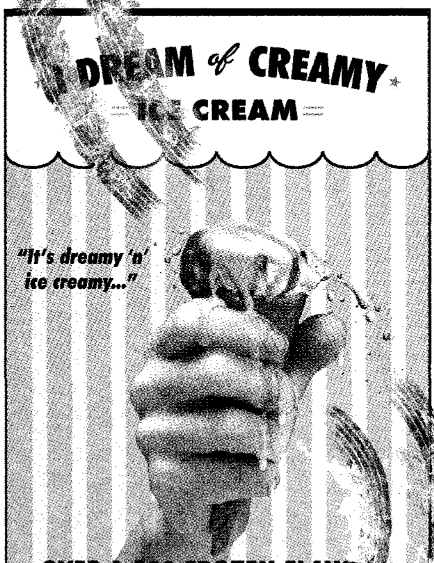
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SHOUTS & MURMURS

"GOSH I LOVE AMERICA!": A 2008 CAMPAIGN QUIZ

BY PAUL SLANSKY

1. Two of these quotes are from Mike Gravel. Which one is from Mitt Romney?

(a) "I am prepared to tell you that Americans are getting fatter and dumber. I have no problem saying that."

(b) "I think we at one point were fish coming out of the slime."

(c) "Gosh, I love America!"

2. How did a *Times* editorial describe Rudolph Giuliani when he was mayor?

(a) "A human hand grenade."

(b) "A pit bull with a comb-over."

(c) "A clumsy wife-leaver."

Who's who?

3. Bob Allen.

4. Kristian Forland.

5. Thomas Ravenel.

(a) Bill Richardson's field director in eastern Nevada, who resigned after it was revealed that he'd worked at a legal brothel and was wanted for writing bad checks.

(b) Rudy Giuliani's South Carolina campaign chairman, who resigned after being indicted on cocaine charges.

(c) The campaign worker for John McCain who resigned after being arrested for soliciting sex in a Florida rest room.

6. After he came in second in the Iowa straw poll, Mike Huckabee said that the experience of being swarmed by the media was akin to what?

(a) "Britney Spears being released from prison."

(b) "Lindsay Lohan shaving her head."

(c) "Paris Hilton being photographed passed out in her car."

7. Who is Janet Neff?

(a) The reporter who wrote a story about Hillary Clinton's cleavage.

(b) The judge whose nomination to a federal district court Sam Brownback tried to block because she had attended the same-sex commitment ceremony of a neighbor's daughter four years earlier.

(c) The blogger on the John Edwards campaign who resigned after writing about George W. Bush's "wingnut Christofascist base."

8. Two of these candidates apologized for saying that American lives lost in the Iraq war had been "wasted." Who apologized for saying that homosexuality was "a choice"?

(a) Bill Richardson.

(b) Barack Obama.

(c) John McCain.

9. Complete this statement by Newt Gingrich, who keeps threatening to enter the race: "I think it's proven I'm _____."

(a) not getting the Hispanic vote

(b) candidate material

(c) the kind of guy who leaves his wives as soon as they become ill

10. Two of these statements apply to Mitt Romney. Which one applies to Tom Tancredo?

(a) He said that his favorite novel is L. Ron Hubbard's "Battlefield Earth," though he pointed out that the author had not yet founded Scientology when he wrote it.

(b) He claimed to have been "a hunter pretty much all my life," then admitted that he'd only rarely ever hunted, and "small varmints," at that.

(c) He suggested that the United States "nuke Mecca."

Who did what?

11. Fred Thompson.

12. Dennis Kucinich.

13. John Edwards.

14. Rudy Giuliani.

(a) Found his name often appearing in sentences containing the word "hair" or "haircut."

(b) Answered a phone call from his wife in the middle of a speech to the N.R.A.

(c) Got laughed at when he referred to "my inauguration as President" in 2009.

(d) Found his name often appearing in sentences containing the word "lazy."

15. At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Joseph Biden referred to the queue of senators waiting to speak. How did he pronounce "queue"?

(a) "Kwa-you."

(b) "Kway."

(c) "Cue-you-ee."

Who did what?

16. Hillary Clinton.

17. Chuck Hagel.

18. Barack Obama.

19. John McCain.

(a) Said that MoveOn.org, because of its ill-conceived "General Betray Us" ad, "ought to be thrown out of this country."

(b) Was upset to learn that a formerly friendly mogul had switched candidates.

(c) Mistakenly said that "ten thousand people died" in a Kansas tornado that claimed twelve lives.

(d) Called a press conference to announce an unreadiness to announce anything.

20. Who is Jim Riches?

(a) The Fox News reporter who broke the erroneous story that Barack Obama attended a Muslim school.

(b) A business associate of the indicted Clinton fund-raiser Norman Hsu.

(c) The New York Fire Department deputy chief who said of Rudy Giuliani, "If somebody can tell me what he did on 9/11 that was so good, I'd love to hear it. All he did was give information on the TV."

21. What did John McCain say could cause him to drop out of the race before the New Hampshire primary?

(a) "Forgetting which world leaders are still alive."

(b) "Contracting a fatal disease."

(c) "Getting caught in a men's-room stall with Larry Craig."

Answers:
(1) c, (2) a, (3) c, (4) a, (5) b, (6) a, (7) b, (8) a,
(9) b, (10) c, (11) d, (12) c, (13) a, (14) b, (15) b,
(16) b, (17) d, (18) c, (19) a, (20) c, (21) b.

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

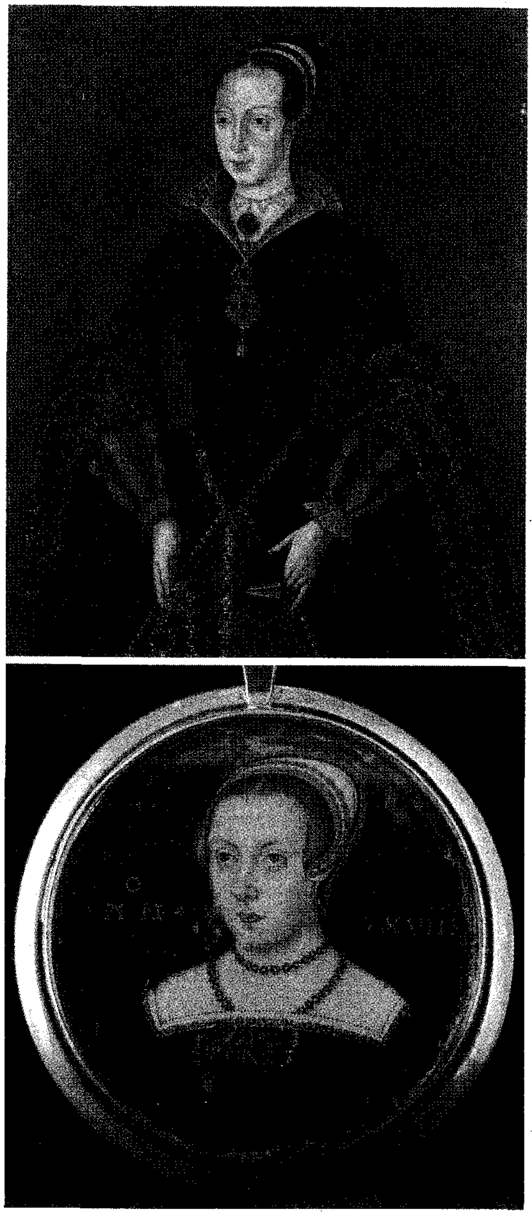
TEEN QUEEN

Looking for Lady Jane.

BY CYNTHIA ZARIN

Bookish, bartered, and betrayed: few girls, even in the British Royal Family, were as hounded as Lady Jane Grey. Almost three hundred years after her execution, Charles Dickens, who made a specialty of exploited children, wrote that the English axe "never struck so cruel and so vile a blow." Jane was a cousin of Edward VI, the only son of Henry VIII. As Edward lay dying, he tried to secure the legacy of his father's Reformation by making Jane, an ardent Protestant, queen. She was fifteen. The scheme failed—her reign lasted nine days, the shortest of any British monarch—and she was held in the Tower of London. The icy morning of her death, in February, 1554, Jane watched from a window as the headless corpse of her husband, Guilford Dudley, returned from Tower Hill in a cart. On the scaffold, she asked for forgiveness in accepting the crown but maintained her innocence in the plot that had resulted in her succession. She recited the Fifty-first Psalm—"Let the bones you have crushed rejoice"—and asked the executioner to kill her quickly. Her nurses shrank back, in tears. Jane, blindfolded, knelt and groped for the block, asking, "What shall I do? Where is it?"

A Jane Grey cult has lingered for centuries. (Recently, under the heading "Pleading Jane's Case," the *Telegraph* of London printed a letter suggesting that her bones be moved from the Tower, where she was buried unceremoniously next to Anne Boleyn, to Westminster Abbey.) Her life was dramatized in 1694, by John Banks, as "The Innocent Usurper," and in 1715, by Nicholas Rowe, the author of "Tamerlane"; both used her example to try to refute the claims of the Catholic pretender, James II. In 1809, Francis Hodgson, a poet and a friend of Lord Byron's, published a book about Jane which emphasized her virtue and piety. Similar books followed in the Victorian era—in 1853, David W. Bartlett wrote so that readers might "imitate the character" of this "beautiful and illustrious woman." Frances Hodgson Burnett, the author of "The Secret Garden," used Jane's story twice, in her novels "The Shuttle" ("Not a man near who dared utter a word of pity") and "The Lost Prince." Dylan and the Rolling Stones both referred to her in songs ("Queen Jane Approximately" and "Lady Jane"). She has been portrayed three times on the screen—most recently by Helena Bonham Carter, in Trevor Nunn's 1986 "Lady Jane." In 2003, a librarian in Concrete, Washington, was discovered moonlighting as a dominatrix under the name Lady Jane Grey. This summer, when I asked Sarah Martin, the lead singer of the Texas folk-rock band Lady Jane Grey, how the group chose the name, she told me, "She was a teen-age martyr. She was spiritual, and we are, too."

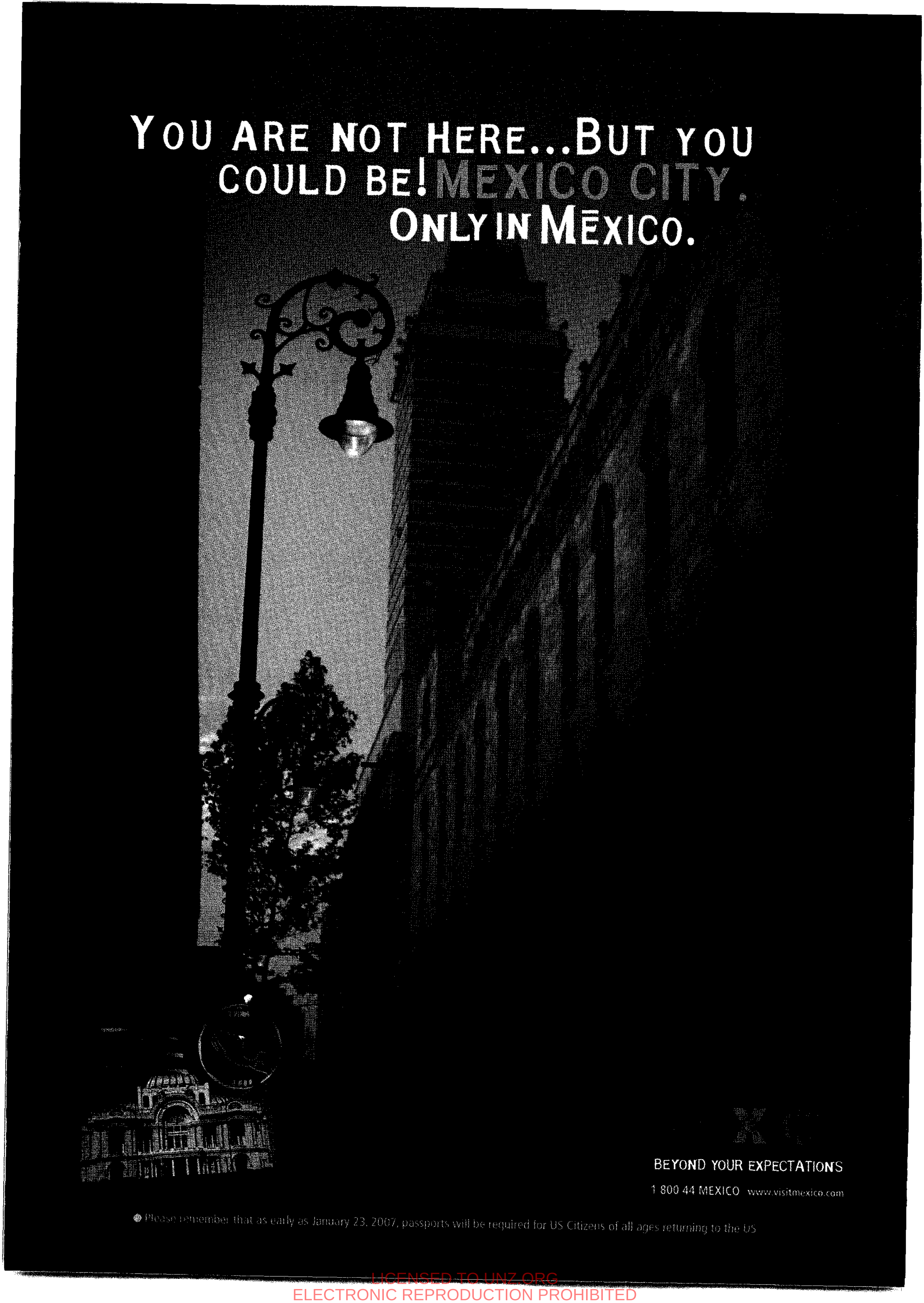


The Streatham portrait (top), at London's National Portrait Gallery, and the Yale miniature.

"LADY JANE DUDLEY (NÉE GREY)" / © NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON; "PORTRAIT OF A LADY, POSSIBLY LADY JANE GREY"/YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

Other "wronged" royals have their devotees—Mary, Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and, chief among them, Diana, Princess of Wales. But when people think of Diana, they see her—the shy half wave from the carriage, the glamorous evenings out—in photographs so prized that they led to her death. Jane Grey, though, is the only English monarch since Henry VII for whom no contemporary image is known to exist. (A portrait is mentioned in a 1590 inventory, but it has never been conclusively identified.) The blank where her face should be has made it that much easier for succeeding generations to imprint their political and personal fantasies on her. However, in the past two years two purported images of her have appeared—one in New Haven and the other in a London suburb—and she is once again at the center of a dispute.

A few weeks before Christmas, in 2005, Christopher Foley, a London art dealer who specializes in early portraits, received a phone call from Sir John Guinness, who sits on the boards of several British art institutions. A man in Streatham, South London, had been writing letters to various museums claiming that he had a portrait of Jane Grey, and Guinness asked Foley to investigate. Foley is a tall, dishevelled, amiable man in his late fifties, who lives in an early-nineteenth-century house in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Kensington. The walls are lined with English portraits. "It's a truism in the business that there *is* no Lady Jane Grey portrait," he told me. "The idea was to go shut the fellow up."

That weekend, Foley drove in the rain to Streatham, a middle-class suburb near Wimbledon. The man who met him at the door, an artist, said that the picture had been bought by his great-grandfather, an antiques collector. They went up to the attic, where the portrait was resting on an easel. Foley recalled, "Within a moment, I knew it was right. I've sold over one thousand Jacobean and Tudor portraits. I knew the panel and the pigment were sixteenth-century."

The picture Foley saw, now known as the Streatham portrait, was a three-quarter-length likeness, twenty-four inches wide by thirty-four inches high, of a slight, high-browed, brown-eyed adolescent girl, her red hair tucked behind a headband, in opulent Tudor dress, with patterns of gilt strawberries and fleurs-de-lis. She wore a necklace with hanging jewelled medallions finished with large teardrop pearls, and held a prayer book. In the upper left corner was the inscription, in gold pigment, "LADY JAYNE." There was some damage: the mouth and the eyes had been deliberately scored, or so it appeared, with a sharp object.

The painting was uninspired—Foley thought it "a really bad picture"—and he said that while it might be a portrait of Jane Grey, he also believed that it was a later copy of a contemporary portrait. No painter of such limited talent, he felt, would have been given a court commission. It was more typical to find paintings of this journeymanlike quality later in the sixteenth century, when portraiture was more common, and more artists were working as copyists.

By the fifteenth century, the painting of life portraits, which had been dormant through the Middle Ages, had reappeared in Italy and the Netherlands, where it coincided with the Renaissance emphasis on the primacy of the individual. (In 1490, Leonardo described the portrait as a vehicle for expressing "the motions of the mind.") But it wasn't until 1526, when Hans Holbein, bearing an introduction from the philosopher Erasmus, arrived in London and painted Sir Thomas More and his family, that modern portraiture became established in England. (Earlier portraits of royalty, on seals and coins, made no attempt at true likeness.) It is impossible to estimate the exact number of portraits painted during the Tudor era, but only a fraction were made before 1558, when Elizabeth I ascended to the throne and through portraiture promoted her own image as the Virgin Queen.

CODA

I tried lacing loss into these lines,
thinking to bind it safely there.

But when much lifetime had raced by I
saw rather

trapped in the scrag noose, too,
joy and daylight.

I bottled also bile in these poems,
thinking to isolate

the toxin. But when much lifetime had raced by I
found it on the mantel.

I thought to lower these poems into a salt dome—
stable, it's said, for aeons.

And who isn't one?
Once

I tried to write invisibly,
but all lifetime is a candle.

—*Richard Kenney*

According to romantic convention, Lady Jane Grey was born in the same month as her cousin Edward, in October, 1537, at Bradgate Park, in Leicestershire. She was the third and first surviving child of Henry Grey, Marquess of Dorset and later Duke of Suffolk, and Frances Brandon, the daughter of Mary Tudor—Henry VIII's younger sister, who was briefly Queen of France. Jane was fifth in line to the throne. In early 1546, she became part of the household of Henry's sixth and last wife, Catherine Parr, who treated her with affection, but Jane's life was distinguished most by her precocity—she read Latin, French, Italian, Hebrew, and Greek—and by her parents' ambition.

In 1548, her father sold her guardianship, for two thousand pounds, to Lord Thomas Seymour, an uncle of Prince Edward's. Seymour's plan was to marry Jane to Edward, who that year succeeded Henry VIII. Nothing came of it, although Seymour was executed (his plan involved kidnapping Edward), and Jane was sent back to Bradgate. In June of 1553, however, Edward, adamant that the crown not pass to his Catholic half sister, Mary, secretly drafted a Device for Succession, which made Jane his heir, and disinherited both Mary and his other half sister, Elizabeth. (Disinheriting only Mary, and not Elizabeth—who was also Protestant—was too transparent politically.) Edward was abetted by the president of his Privy Council, the Duke of Northumberland, who had his own agenda: in May, Jane had been married off to his son Guilford Dudley.

Edward died on July 6, 1553, at the age of fifteen. When Northumberland told Jane that she was queen, she fell to the ground and wept. She later wrote that the moment left her "stupefied." The only known contemporary physical description of Jane comes from Baptista Spinola, a Genoese visitor to London, who watched the cautious royal procession pass through the city the next day:

> This Jane is very short and thin, but prettily shaped and graceful. She has small features and a well-made nose, the mouth flexible and the lips red. The eyebrows are arched and darker than her hair, which is nearly red. Her eyes are sparkling and reddish brown in colour. I stood so near her grace that I noticed her colour was good but freckled. When she smiled she showed her teeth, which are white and sharp. In all, a gracious and animated figure.

Mary, in Norfolk, gathered her troops. When Northumberland left London to capture her, a jittery Privy Council, foreseeing charges of treason, declared Mary queen. Jane's own father signed the proclamation, then fled the city without her. As Mary and her troops entered London on August 3rd, Jane Grey and Guilford Dudley were arrested. Northumberland was executed. Jane spent seven months in the Tower; her parents neither wrote nor attempted to visit her. The day before her death, she wrote a goodbye letter to her younger sister ("Consider that I shall be delivered of this corruption"), on a page of a Greek New Testament.

After seeing the portrait, Foley contacted the National Portrait Gallery, and in January, 2006, the *Guardian* reported that "experts are now claiming" that a picture found in southwest London was a portrait of Lady Jane Grey. Among those asked for comment was David Starkey, a popular historian and BBC television presenter, whose series include "The Six Wives of Henry VIII." A fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, he has also written several books on the Tudor period, and in June he was awarded a C.B.E. for service to history. (Starkey, who is sixty-two and wears horn-rimmed glasses and a habitual expression of incredulity, is also famously impolitic: his outbursts on the BBC program "The Moral Maze" have earned him the title in the tabloids of the "rudest man in Britain.") Starkey told the *Guardian* that he was skeptical about the Streatham portrait, noting that it "doesn't 'sing.'"

Starkey did not mention that that winter he, too, had an interest in Jane Grey. Starting in January, he was a consultant to the Philip Mould Gallery, in Mayfair, which specializes in historical portraits, for an exhibition to be called "Lost Faces." Scheduled for March, 2007, the show, in which no works would be offered for sale, would highlight recent finds from the Tudor period. As Starkey later told me, "For 'Lost Faces,' we needed 'found faces.'"

Over the next few months, as Starkey was conducting his own research, Foley, in consultation with art historians and technical experts, prepared a report on the Streatham painting for the National Portrait Gallery. Through dendrochronology (the dating of wood through tree rings), they determined that the Baltic oak of the panel had been felled, aged, and used in the fifteen-nineties—almost forty years after Jane's death. The pigments were contemporary with that period: the yellow lead pigment in the painting became rare after 1600.

Foley's guess that the painting was a copy of an earlier portrait had also been based on the sitter's costume, which exactly replicates Tudor dress of the fifteen-fifties. Unless the painter, working forty years later, was copying an existing portrait, it would have been unlikely that he would have got the details right.

Was the sitter Jane? The costume and the jewels mark her as a person of extremely high rank. Conservators determined that the inscription, "LADY JAYNE," was painted when the background was wet—it wasn't a later addition. According to the report, there were only four other women at court at that time named Lady Jane. Two were too young; a third would have used her husband's surname, and a fourth lost her honorific after her father, the Earl of Surrey, was executed. Then, there were clues in the costume. The fleurs-de-lis and the gilt strawberries—which indicate the female grandchild of a sovereign—might link the sitter, if it was Jane Grey, to her grandmother Queen Mary of France. While no exact match for the jewels was found in the Tudor jewel inventory—a contemporary list of the jewels owned by the Royal Family—Mary and Elizabeth owned similar pieces. The damage to the painting had been most likely inflicted when the paint was still rela-

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tively soft: the scratches had sliced through the paint without splintering it. There appeared to be seventeen such scratches, made by a sharp blade, through the eyes, the nose, and the mouth, as if someone—possibly a Catholic partisan—had tried to obliterate the face. Also compelling to Foley was the fact that the girl in the picture matched Spinola's description of Jane.

In April, Foley wrote up the findings, which confirmed his initial impressions, and sent a copy of them to Sir John Guinness, who suggested that he also send a copy to David Starkey. Starkey wrote to Foley that though he found the case interesting, he remained skeptical.

In November, the trustees of the National Portrait Gallery voted to buy the Streatham portrait, for ninety-five thousand pounds. Foley brokered the deal. (In the current art market, it wasn't much: last year the Gallery raised 1.4 million pounds to purchase a contemporary portrait of John Donne.) There was one immediate objection—from Starkey. While earlier in the year he'd been noncommittal about the Streatham portrait, he now told the *Guardian* that not only was it an "appallingly bad picture," but "there's absolutely no reason to suppose it's got anything to do with Lady Jane Grey. If the National Portrait Gallery has public money to burn, then so be it." He added, "There's no documentary evidence, no evidence from inventories, jewellery, or heraldry to support the idea this is Lady Jane Grey."

Foley responded in the *Guardian* that perhaps Starkey was annoyed that he hadn't found the picture himself. Many people, Foley remarked, "know more about the science of painting than David Starkey." As for the quality of the picture, he noted, "Who said all pictures of monarchs have to be masterpieces? Many contemporary portraits of Elizabeth I look like pub signs." All the evidence needed, he said, was intrinsic to the painting itself.

A few months earlier, it turned out, while researching the "Lost Faces" show for the Philip Mould Gallery, Starkey had made a discovery of his own. Bendor Grosvenor, a director at the gallery, told me, "David rang me up. He was breathless. He said, 'I've found Lady Jane Grey!' She was the Rosetta stone. I made, let's say, a graphic exclamation of shock and excitement."

Starkey told Grosvenor that he had found a photograph of a miniature in a catalogue from a 1983 show at the Victoria and Albert Museum, "Artists of the Tudor Court: The Portrait Miniature Rediscovered." He hadn't seen the actual painting, but he was sure it was a contemporary portrait of Jane. Grosvenor found the catalogue in the gallery's library. The show had been curated by Sir Roy Strong, who was then the director of the V. & A. The miniature was in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, in New Haven. Describing the photograph, Grosvenor made a circle with his thumb and forefinger and brought it to his eye as if looking through a monocle. He laughed. "It was *that* small," he said.

The round miniature, which is less than two inches in diameter, is of a young, full-faced woman with light-brown hair and blue eyes—Strong called her a "fully developed, tough teenager"—dressed in a severe black square-necked gown. Oak leaves, acorns, and what look like tiny yellow flowers, which Strong identified as cowslips, are tucked into her brooch, which features a black classical head set in gold. The arms are abnormally small, even spindly. A faint inscription reads "ANO XVIII." The background is lapis blue. Strong suggested that the sitter might be Elizabeth I, and tentatively attributed the miniature to Levina Teerlinc, a Flemish painter attached to the Tudor court.

The identity of the sitter has long been questioned. The miniature was auctioned as one of a pair, of a husband and wife, at Sotheby's London in 1970. (Both portraits were then attributed to the court painter Lucas Horenbout; Strong disagreed that the sitters were a couple, and attributed the male portrait to Hans Holbein.) The miniatures were subsequently bought by Paul Mellon, and in 1974 he donated them to Yale.

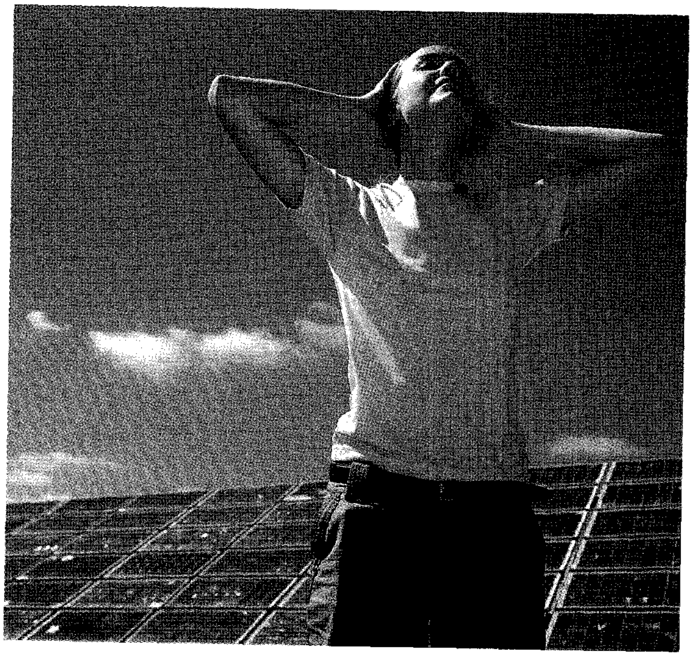
In August, Philip Mould wrote to Amy Meyers, the director of the Yale Center for British Art, to request a loan of the female portrait miniature for "Lost Faces." Meyers told me, "We thought it was an interesting thesis. But we were in no way endorsing David's opinion."

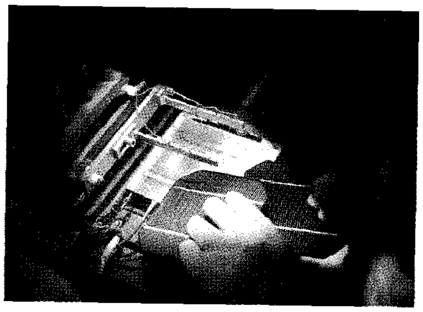
As a historian, Starkey has been particularly interested in young monarchs—his book "Elizabeth I" focusses on that queen's early years. Last June, he told me, "I'm interested in *lives*. One of the elements of biography is portraiture—however much phrenology is a pseudoscience, we tend to need faces. The challenge became to find an image of Jane Grey. I literally began trawling." He added, "I was looking at Roy Strong's book, and I thought, Eureka! I'm ninety per cent sure."

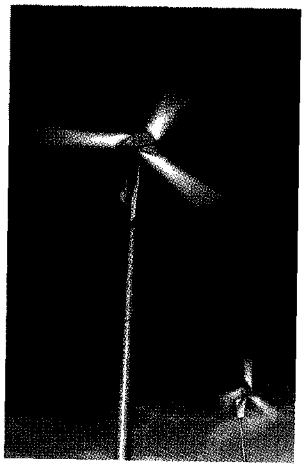
When I asked him about the Streatham portrait, he told me, "What I've said is that it doesn't matter, because it's such a bad picture. Why *have* such a portrait? For the National Portrait Gallery, it's a trophy. It turns curatorship into philately. It's a late, scruffy, unrecognizable portrait of something or other. It doesn't *matter* if the attribution is correct."

The Streatham portrait was not the first picture of Jane Grey to show up in the National Portrait Gallery. The archives are full of copies of spurious images, and a full-length portrait identified as Jane hung in the Gallery for thirty years, until 1996, when the red-haired sitter, who also resembled the Spinola description, was re-identified as Catherine Parr, after the necklace in the painting was found in the list of her jewels in the Tudor inventory. (The question remains, though, of whether Catherine could have lent Jane the jewels.)

The Streatham portrait was hung in the Tudor Gallery. One morning last June, it was filled with schoolchildren gaping at the kings and queens. In the gallery's low light, the red and gold of the portrait looks bleached; the slight figure has the flat face of a paper doll. Tarnya Cooper, the Gallery's curator of Tudor paintings, told me, "We now think this picture may have been one of a set of Protestant martyrs, a memorial picture painted shortly after her death." She added, "We're the first to admit it's a paint-by-number, labored copy. David Starkey is a colorful character, and his reaction to this is, let's say, colorful." She smiled, and said, "I don't know if he's come to see this, and







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KEY NOTES

THOUGHT LEADERS PROPEL INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

From conducting research in the biosciences to *increasing green education* or developing energy-efficient housing, important work begins with the commitment of individuals. The following three leaders in environmental thinking have motivated scientists and students alike to uncover ways to conserve, develop, and produce energy that will be safe, clean, and abundant.

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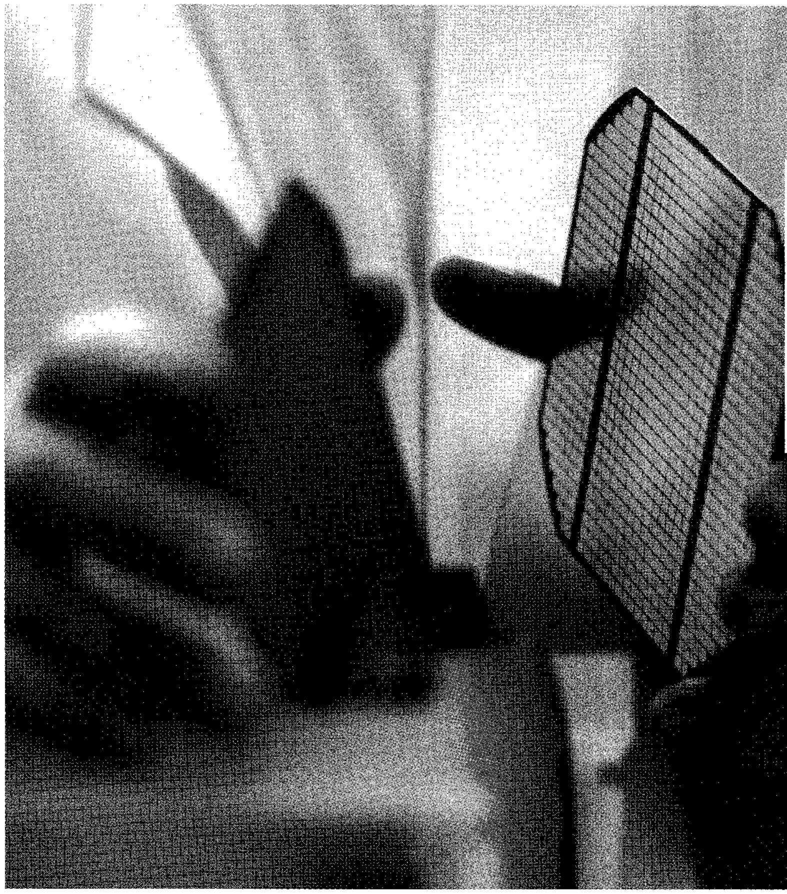
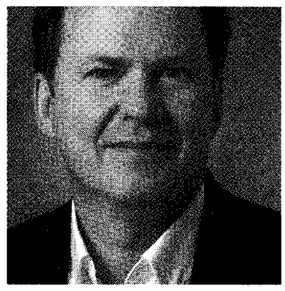


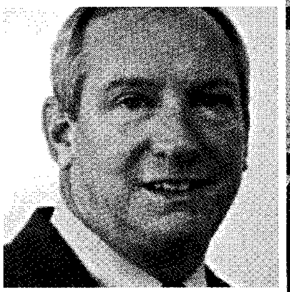


SOLAR DECATHLON
COMPETING TO BUILD A SMARTER HOME

Richard King, Solar Decathlon Director, U.S. Department of Energy – Every two years, teams of university students design, construct, and operate solar-powered houses for the Solar Decathlon, a competition that measures energy efficiency, energy production, and design innovation. These high-tech green homes will be on view October 12–20, 2007, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Contest rules require that each solar-powered house generate enough energy to support all its household needs while providing all the comforts and conveniences we expect today. King says, “Teaching the next generation of architects and engineers the benefits of solar energy and energy efficiency will pay dividends for all Americans.” BP is a major sponsor of the Solar Decathlon. To follow all the action, visit SolarDecathlon.org.

FUEL FOR THOUGHT
CREATING AN ENERGY BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

Jim Breson, Project General Manager, BP – Jim Breson is working on the world’s first dedicated biosciences energy research lab, the Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI), a collaboration between BP and the University of California Berkeley, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. BP has committed half a billion dollars over the next ten years to support the institute’s research in applying biotechnology to finding new sources of clean, renewable energy. EBI is certain to be at the forefront of efforts to seek what Breson calls “real solutions to help global energy security and extend the nation’s fuel supply.”



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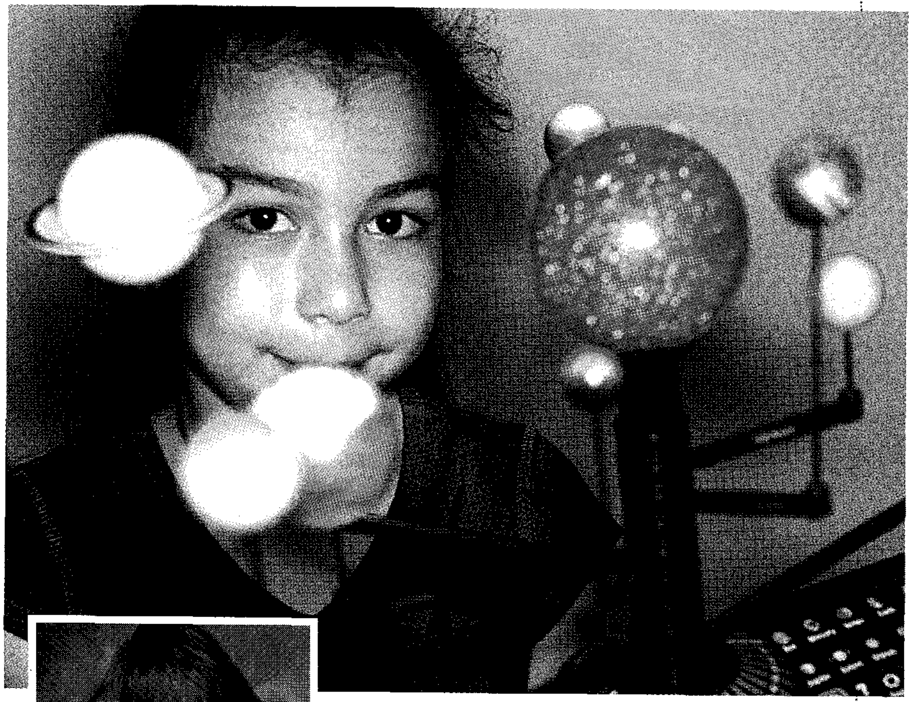

A+ FOR ENERGY

ENLIGHTENING THE NEXT GENERATION

Kim Rock, Third-Grade Teacher, Nathan Hale Elementary School – With help from a $10,000 grant and scholarship from BP, Kim Rock is teaching her students in Whiting, Indiana, how to audit their families' energy use at home. That means checking to see how many unused appliances are left plugged in, investigating where drafts are letting warm air escape, and monitoring how long the hot water runs before anyone steps into the shower. Then students will help save energy by turning off lights, unplugging idle electronics, and switching to compact fluorescent bulbs. "Any little thing you can do is going to help conserve energy and preserve the environment," Rock says. This year, through the "A+ for Energy" program, BP awarded more than five million dollars in grants and scholarships to teachers in seven states and Canada to help bring that lesson home.

WHAT SIZE IS YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

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there's been no correspondence at all with the Gallery. But we have a wider remit than exquisite portraiture: this is a historical document, and it's unlikely that a lifetime portrait will surface. For Lady Jane Grey, there was an incredibly small window in which her portrait might be painted, after which things fell apart."

The miniature, which Starkey still had not seen for himself, was taken to London in February, and "Lost Faces" opened on March 7th. Spurred in part by newspaper headlines ("THE GIRL WHO WAS A QUEEN FOR NINE DAYS"), more than a thousand people attended the show during its two-week run. In an essay in the show's catalogue, Starkey, Grosvenor, and the Tudor expert Alasdair Hawkyard contend that the brooch worn by the sitter is on the list of Jane Grey's jewels in the inventory, and that the sprigs tucked into it, which are identified as gillyflowers and oak leaves with acorns, represent, respectively, Guilford Dudley, her husband, and Robert Dudley, her brother-in-law. (Gillyflowers, they explain, were Guilford's emblem, and acorns were Robert's.) They also suggest that the austere black gown worn by the sitter might have been an outward display of Jane's Protestant piety. They argue, too, that the inscription "ANO XVIII" means that the sitter was in the eighteenth year of her life, and that "Jane could thus have been seventeen at the time of her nine-day reign," and they cite evidence that her age when she died, conventionally sixteen, should be revisited.

Six days later, a long letter from Christopher Foley appeared in the *London Antiques Trade Gazette*. He challenged the evidence on all counts: her brooch (he said it was not the brooch in the inventory, and, in any case, such pieces were common in the mid-sixteenth century); the flora (Tudor women, he said, did not wear the emblems of their brothers-in-law); and her age (he dates the dress in the painting to 1542-46, when Jane would have been, at most, eleven). He also remarked on the discrepancy between the sitter's appearance—brown hair, blue eyes—and Spinola's description of Jane.

Further, on the question of Jane's age at her death, Foley cited research by an American historian, Stephan Edwards. Edwards agrees that Jane was born before October, 1537: the documented presence of her mother, Frances Brandon, at the funeral of Jane Seymour, the mother of Edward VI, who died two weeks after Edward was born, makes a shared birthdate for Jane and Edward impossible—Tudor women did not appear in public for forty days after giving birth. But if Jane was seventeen, or even just turned eighteen, as Edwards's recent discovery of a reference by Jane's Italian tutor may suggest, then the miniature was painted when Jane was being held in the Tower. Starkey thinks that if the portrait was not made while Jane was queen, then it could have been painted after her arrest. Edwards counters, "Jane had the potential to become a Protestant martyr. Why would Mary have allowed it? No person in the sixteenth century had his or her portrait painted in the Tower. To a historian, unique is alarming. And that dress! At court, it would have been like dressing as a goth to go to the White House!" He groaned. "Of course, the really frustrating thing is that it can *all* be wrong."

The Yale miniature was on view this past summer in New Haven, in a show called "Paul Mellon's Legacy: A Passion for British Art." The wall copy read "Portrait of a lady, possibly Lady Jane Grey, ca. 1553," and attributed the conjecture to David Starkey's recent "interesting possibility." Scott Wilcox, Yale's curator for prints and drawings, told me that the miniature wasn't originally part of the show, "but, given her recent notoriety, we put her in."

When I asked Sir Roy Strong, who wrote about the miniature for the Victoria and Albert show, about the latest dispute over Jane Grey, he told me, "She's a celebrity, and she came to a sticky end." He laughed. "There's an industry, always, for distinguished, educated women who get their heads chopped off." ♦

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ANNALS OF FINANCE

THE BLOW-UP ARTIST

Can Victor Niederhoffer survive another market crisis?

BY JOHN CASSIDY

On a wall opposite Victor Niederhoffer's desk is a large painting of the Essex, a Nantucket whaling ship that sank in the South Pacific in 1820, after being attacked by a giant sperm whale, and that later served as the inspiration for "Moby-Dick." The Essex's captain, George Pollard, Jr., survived, and persuaded his financial backers to give him another ship, but he sailed it for little more than a year before it foundered on a coral reef. Pollard was ruined, and he ended his days as a night watchman. The painting, which Niederhoffer, a sixty-three-year-old hedge-fund manager, acquired after losing all his clients' money—and a good deal of his own—in the Thai stock market crash of 1997, serves as an admonition against the incaution to which he, a notorious risk-taker, is prone, and as a reminder of the precariousness of his success.

Niederhoffer has been a professional investor for nearly three decades, during which he has made and lost several fortunes—typically by relying on methods that other traders consider reckless or unorthodox or both. In the nineteen-seventies, he wrote one of the first software programs to identify profitable trades. In the early eighties, he went into business with George Soros, then arguably the world's most successful investor. A few years later, when prominent money managers were based almost exclusively in Manhattan, Niederhoffer moved his home and his trading room to Connecticut, to a twenty-thousand-square-foot neo-Tudor mansion crammed with books, manuscripts, silver jewelry, art work, and a collection of seashells. The walls of his vast living room, which has a ceiling about thirty feet high, are covered with more than two dozen paintings, many depicting industrial landscapes or Western shoot-'em-ups, and the floor is occupied by, among other objects, a large painted pony, a black-spotted wooden hound carrying three quail on its back, a seated pig, and two miniature black bears. Niederhoffer's home is also frequently occupied by various of his children. (He has six daughters and an infant son, from two marriages and an extramarital relationship.)

After the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Niederhoffer was forced out of business for several years. Then, in his late fifties, he made a dramatic recovery. He founded three new hedge funds and launched a Web site, DailySpeculations.com, where he posts his idiosyncratic insights into the stock market—"What can we learn from shelled species about the markets?" he wrote in May—as well as opinions about sports, politics, and culture ("'The Fantasticks,' currently running as a revival on Broadway, is the perfect musical"). He has mentored dozens of successful traders, many of whom regard him as a guru. "Before I joined Victor, I used to trade for a Wall Street firm," James Lackey, a self-employed Florida investor who placed trades for Niederhoffer from 2002 to 2006, told me. "But I quickly realized that I didn't know very much. What he taught me was how to approach the market as a whole, and how to analyze it scientifically. He was just amazing at seeing what was happening and showing us how to make money."

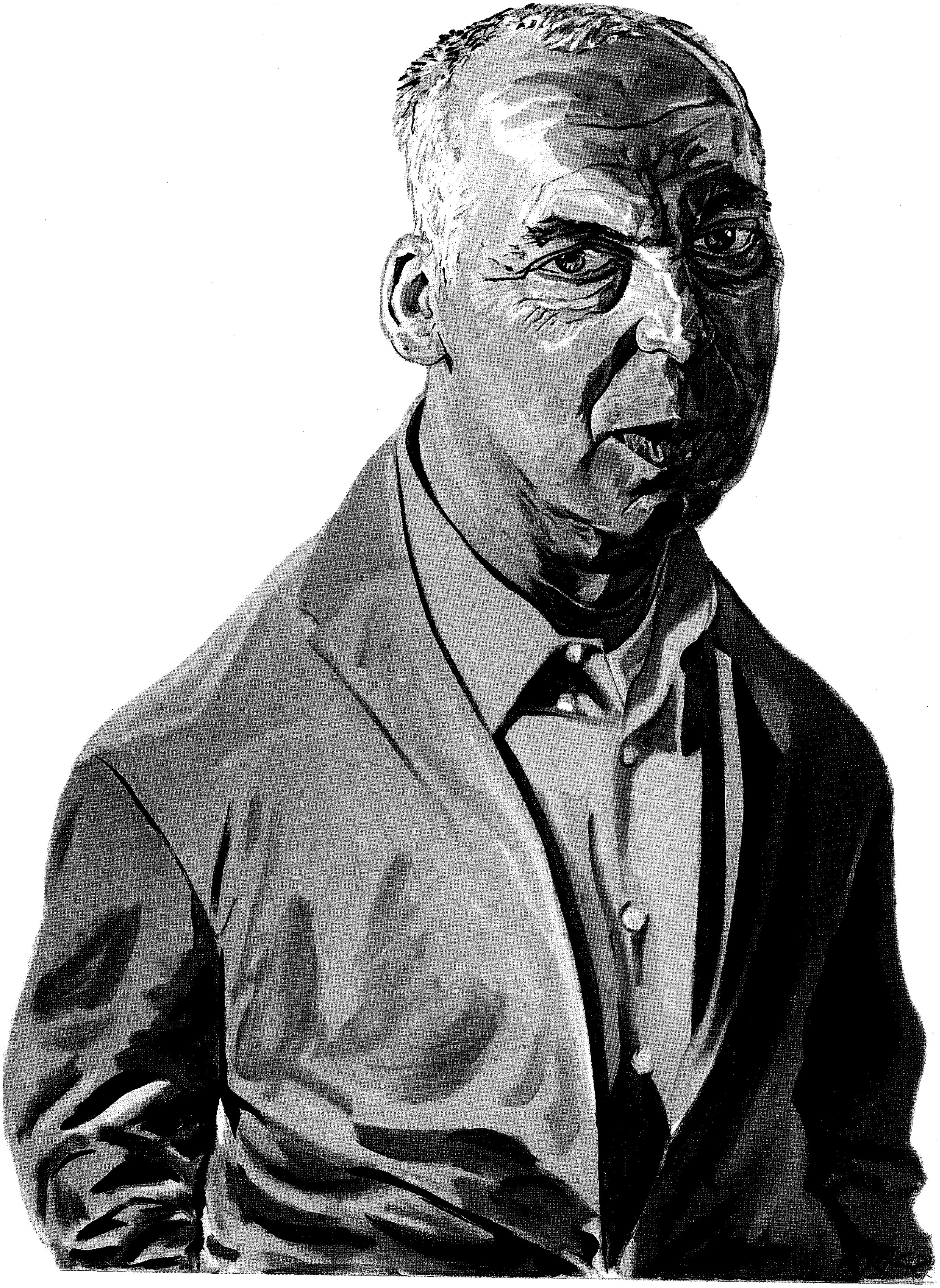
Niederhoffer, a former national squash champion who is considered one of the most talented Americans to have played the game, relishes the acclaim, but he knows that in his field circumstances can change quickly. By the end of August, his funds were in trouble, and on Wall Street rumors circulated that he would soon be out of business again. Niederhoffer had been worried all summer, but he tried to project a wry, self-deprecating humor. "If an event like 1997 occurred again, my dependents would be up the creek, and I would be a night watchman somewhere, just like Captain Pollard," he said to me when I visited him at his home one morning in June. "In America, they give you a second chance but not a third."

Tall and trim (he still looks like an athlete), with closely cropped white hair, olive skin, and a long, expressive face, Niederhoffer speaks softly, with a strong Brooklyn accent. He was wearing a yellow shirt, pink trousers, and white socks, but no shoes—he maintains a "no shoes" rule in the office, to reduce noise—and was sitting behind his desk, which is dominated by two Bloomberg screens, in a large room over the garage which he shares with his partner, Steve Wisdom, and several members of his company, Manchester Trading. (The trading operation fits into two rooms; the other one is over the kitchen.) In one hand, he was holding a telephone receiver, and his light-blue eyes were fixed on the computer screens. "The market's way down today," he said by way of greeting. Turning back to the telephone and addressing his broker at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, he asked, "Can you repeat those quotes, please?" After a few seconds, he said, "I'll sell two hundred red March at five hundred and ten. I'll sell two hundred blue March at eleven ten."

The Chicago Merc is a futures market, where people trade contracts that give them the right to purchase a particular commodity at a specified date in the future. Originally, the items traded on the exchange were physical commodities, such as eggs, butter, and pigs, and its main customers were farmers and food companies. In recent decades, futures trading has become more abstract; professional speculators now

PHILIP BURKE

Niederhoffer's approach is eclectic. His funds, a friend says, appeal "to people like him: self-made people who have a maverick streak."



use the exchange to place bets on the prices of financial securities, such as stocks, bonds, and currencies—a development that Niederhoffer, a former math prodigy who has a Ph.D. in economics, has exploited. He likes to be at his desk well before the Chicago market opens, especially on days when he has big positions riding overnight. He is mainly a short-term operator—he bets on how prices will move in the subsequent few minutes, hours, or days—and most of his knowledge of current events comes from Bloomberg. (He doesn't read newspapers or watch television.) When he arrives at his office, he turns on his computer and reads about developments in the Asian and European markets, which often foreshadow the day's action in the United States.

At the end of the previous week, the yield on ten-year Treasury bonds had surged to almost five per cent, prompting Niederhoffer to turn uncharacteristically bearish on stocks. Once the bond yield reached five per cent, he had reasoned, some investors would move their money from stocks to bonds, which would depress stock prices. Accordingly, he had sold short more than a billion dollars' worth of stock futures. (Selling short, a common tactic among speculators, involves selling something you don't own with the intention of buying it back later, at a cheaper price. If the price of the security falls while you are "short," you make a profit; if the price rises, you lose money.)

Even by Niederhoffer's generous standards, going short a billion dollars of stock futures was a large bet, but it worked out well. Not long after the markets reopened on Monday, the bond yield climbed to five per cent, and stocks and stock futures tumbled. On Wednesday, the morning of my visit, shortly after the opening bell sounded on Wall Street, Niederhoffer repurchased the futures he had sold, making more than five million dollars.

He didn't look pleased, though. During the morning, stocks had continued to fall, and he knew that if he had waited he could have made an even bigger profit. He says that in twenty-eight years as a professional investor he hasn't had a single truly satisfactory trading day. At eleven o'clock, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had slipped about a hundred points and the S. & P. 500 Index was down about thirteen points. Niederhoffer stared morosely at his Bloomberg screens. "The score doesn't look good," he muttered. The screens were tracking the movements of various stock-market indices in Europe and Latin America, but I noticed that they weren't displaying any American prices. Niederhoffer used to invest heavily overseas, but since his 1997 misadventure in Thai stocks he has confined his trading to the United States. He explained that when the U.S. market was falling he preferred to track the DAX, a German stock index that generally moves in synch with the American market. "You can see how much you are losing, but it doesn't hurt as much as watching the S. & P.," he said.

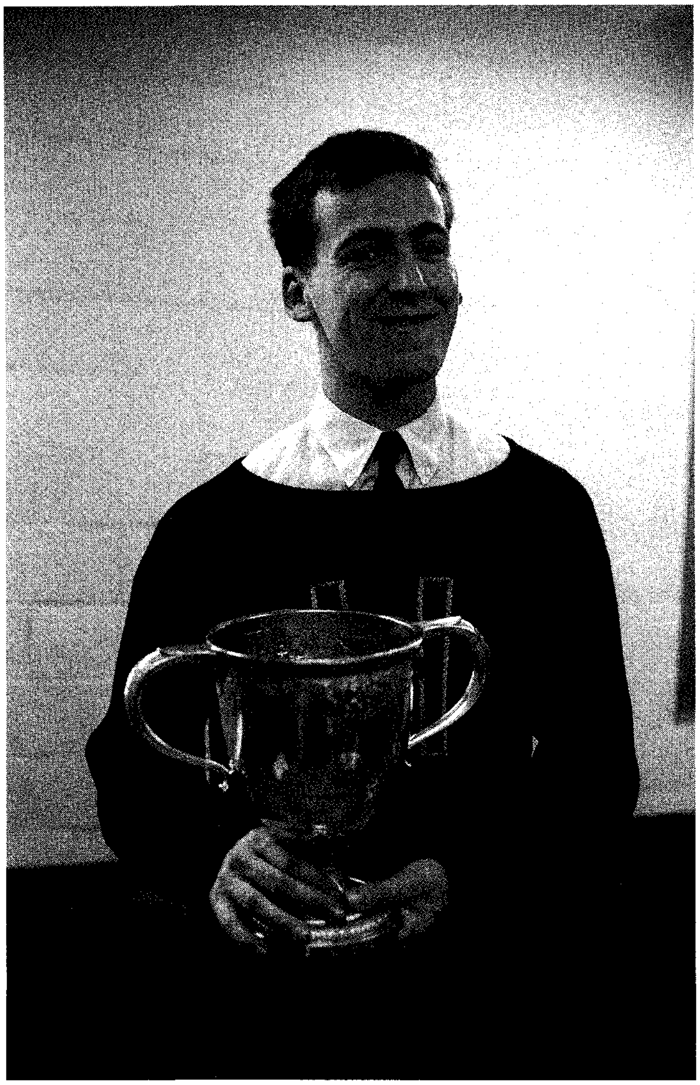
Before long, Niederhoffer cheered up a bit. "There have been three big down opens in a row, which is unusual," he said. "The market doesn't like to do the same things repeatedly." He turned to Alex Castaldo, a thin, bespectacled fifty-three-year-old Italian who has a degree in electrical engineering from M.I.T. and a Ph.D. in finance from CUNY, and asked him to compile some data. "Doc," he said to Castaldo, "what does the market do when it opens down a lot three days in a row?" A few minutes later, Castaldo handed Niederhoffer a computer printout, which showed that since the start of 2003 there had been just ten occasions on which, for three consecutive days, the S. & P. 500 had fallen sharply in the first hour and a half of trading. On eight of those occasions, stocks had bounced back, with the average market rise by the end of the following trading day amounting to three tenths of one per cent. For a trader like Niederhoffer, who uses leverage—borrowed money—to scale up his bets, the ability to predict even relatively small changes in the market can pay off handsomely.

The software that Niederhoffer uses to identify stock-price patterns is a version of the code that he wrote thirty years ago. Many hedge funds and Wall Street banks now rely on such programs to spot potentially lucrative market fluctuations and place orders automatically—a practice known as "black box" investing—but Niederhoffer is scornful of this method. Although markets sometimes move in predictable ways, he says, the patterns change constantly, and reliance on mathematical algorithms can be disastrous. At Manchester Trading, Niederhoffer or Wisdom reviews each trade before it is placed.

In this instance, Niederhoffer expected the market to rebound, but he decided to hold off on buying. Morgan Stanley had just issued a notice advising its clients to reduce their stock holdings. "Plus, the Fed has been making bearish noises," Niederhoffer said. A few minutes earlier, the Dow had dropped below thirteen thousand five hundred. Castaldo went over to Niederhoffer's Bloomberg and called up some U.S. stock charts. Niederhoffer, looking at the falling lines, announced, "It's gone down two per cent—that's enough." Then he turned to Owen Wilson, a young Englishman who has worked for him for a couple of years. Holding a phone to his ear, Wilson shouted out quotes from the Chicago Merc. "Buy a hundred and fifty at eighteen seventy-five," Niederhoffer said. Wilson placed the trades and called out more numbers. Again, Niederhoffer told him to buy. Within a few minutes, Wilson had purchased tens of millions of dollars' worth of stock futures.

Niederhoffer received his first lessons in finance as a child growing up in Brighton Beach. He learned to bet on stoopball, paddleball, and checkers, which he played with other local kids, and with adults who went by nicknames such as Bitter Irving, Bookie, and Nervous Phil. His father, Artie, a New York City cop who spent twenty years on the force before becoming a professor of sociology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, tried unsuccessfully to dissuade him from gambling. "Everything was a money game," Niederhoffer told me. "My father hated it, but I loved to win a nickel or a dime." With the encouragement of his uncle Howie, who was in high school, he also placed wagers on professional sports. In October, 1951, on Yom Kippur, Howie and Victor, who was eight, sneaked out of synagogue and bet eight hundred dollars on the Brooklyn Dodgers, who were playing the New York Giants in a pennant-decider. When Bobby Thomson hit his famous home run, defeating the Dodgers, Howie and Victor were devastated. (The knowledge that only two of the lost dollars were Niederhoffer's did little to console him.)

Niederhoffer says that as far back as the Middle Ages his ancestors were money changers. At the end of the nineteenth century, his paternal great-grandparents moved from Austria to the Lower East Side, where several of their seven sons sold fruit from a horse and cart. Niederhoffer's grandfather Martie, who had a good head for figures, became an accountant. In the boom years of the nineteen-twenties, Martie borrowed money and invested it in real estate and stocks, assembling a portfolio that made him nearly a millionaire. The stock-market crash of October, 1929, destroyed most of his wealth; two years later, the market dived again, wiping out what he had left.



Niederhoffer as captain of the Harvard squash team, in 1964.

FRED KAPLAN/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Martie, who spoke Yiddish and pidgin Spanish, got a job as a translator in a Brooklyn courthouse. But he retained an interest in the stock market, and in 1954 he financed Victor's first equity investment: a hundred shares of the Benguet Mining Company, which was trading at fifty cents. For several years, the stock hardly moved. Then, in just a few months, it doubled in value. On Martie's advice, Victor sold his shares, and made a profit of fifty dollars. During the next thirty-six months, the stock's value increased to thirty dollars a share. "I have repeated the mistake of grabbing at small profits and selling at a targeted round number over and over in my speculative career," he wrote in "The Education of a Speculator," a memoir that he published in 1997. "I believe many others make this same error."

At the age of six, Niederhoffer says, he was such an accomplished paddle-tennis player that he had to spot his opponents fifteen points a game. At thirteen, he defeated a seventeen-year-old to win the New York City junior singles tennis championship. (In school, his competitiveness elicited mixed reactions. At the end of his last year at P.S. 225, his sixth-grade teacher wrote, "Although a little trying at times, you were the spark the class needed this year. You have a keen mind; learn to curb your inclinations to demonstrate superiority.") At Abraham Lincoln High School on Ocean Parkway, Niederhoffer was the president of his class, the captain of the tennis team, the star of the math team, a pianist in the orchestra, a clarinettist in the band, the sports editor of the newspaper, and a frequent contributor to *Vanguard*, the school magazine. In an article that appeared in the June, 1958, issue, Niederhoffer warned that automation "will require a complete reorientation" in the attitudes of trade unions. Five months later, displaying a view of government intervention that he would later renounce, he argued that "federal aid to education is imperative if equality of educational opportunity in our democracy is to have real meaning."

Niederhoffer's father, whom he idolized, encouraged his athletic and intellectual pursuits, and his mother, Elaine, who was descended from a long line of rabbis, pressed him and his younger brother and sister—now, respectively, a commodity-fund adviser and a psychiatric social worker—to succeed. "My mother was never content," Niederhoffer told me. "She pushed us to be No. 1." In January, 1960, at his mother's urging, he applied to Harvard. In a letter of recommendation, his academic adviser and tennis coach, Milton Hecht, wrote, "Victor ranks among the first in intellectual achievement and promise in comparison with the thousands of students I have taught in the last thirty years." Harvard awarded him a partial scholarship, as did Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania. Niederhoffer chose Harvard, where he majored in economics.

Niederhoffer spent less time in the classroom than he did on the squash court. Until he moved to Cambridge, he had never played squash—or squash racquets, as it was then called—but the physical demands of the game appealed to him. He borrowed every book on squash at the Widener Library, and took some with him to the practice court, where he opened them on the floor and repeatedly copied the moves they described. In 1962, as an eighteen-year-old sophomore, Niederhoffer won the junior championship of the National Intercollegiate Squash Racquets Association. A year later, he won the Harry Cowles tournament, a prestigious competition for amateurs. "He has good size, quickness, and a skillful touch," his Harvard coach, Jack Barnaby, told the *News and Views of Harvard Sports*, a campus publication, in January, 1963. "But a lot of players have those attributes. What he has beyond that is one of the most competitive characters I've ever seen. He makes you feel like you are watching a person of Ty Cobb's cut in action again."

In the 1963-64 season, Niederhoffer, now a senior, was captain of the Harvard squash team, which went undefeated. He also won the individual national collegiate title, and his aggressive playing style attracted the attention of a reporter at *Sports Illustrated*, who wrote, "Niederhoffer thinks he is unbeatable and clamors loudly for justice when his shots go awry. Consequently, on those rare occasions when he loses a tournament, squash lovers are delighted." The reporter quoted Niederhoffer's freshman coach, Corey Wynn, who recalled his former student's penchant for "handballing it"—physically blocking his opponents from reaching the ball, a tactic that was frowned upon in New England. Niederhoffer's mother read the article and consulted a Fifth Avenue law firm, Cohn & Glickstein, about suing *Sports Illustrated* for libel. (On the firm's advice, she decided not to file a suit.)

In February, 1966, Niederhoffer won the U.S. national amateur championship, the culmination of a series of important victories. *Sports Illustrated* and *Time* sent reporters to these events, and Niederhoffer wasn't pleased with the coverage. First, he wrote to *Time*, denying its claim that during the national championship he had offered odds of two-to-one against himself. An editor replied, defending the magazine's reporting as having been based on "reliable sources." Unsatisfied, Niederhoffer wrote another letter, to a senior executive at Time-Life, the parent company of both *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*, complaining that the articles had "created the impression that I was a poor boy from Brooklyn who had adjusted badly to the rigors of a social sport."

An aura of class and ethnic prejudice pervaded press accounts of Niederhoffer's achievements; he was widely viewed as an ill-mannered upstart from the wrong side of the East River. The *Times Magazine* noted that he was "built wrong for a squash player: not lithe and wiry, or even tall and gracefully powerful. He is shaped rather like a block—fairly broad in the shoulders, no waist, thick shapeless legs—and his color is sallow, the deep oyster sallow of a New York street creature." In Chicago, where Niederhoffer moved in 1964, to attend graduate school, he couldn't find a squash club that would admit him. He was so offended that for several years he gave up the game.

After he returned to the court, in 1972, he won the national amateur championship four years running, an unprecedented feat. In January, 1975, in Mexico City, he won the North American Open, a major professional tournament, defeating the legendary Pakistani player Sharif Khan in four games. Afterward, Niederhoffer wasn't very gracious. "Khan had a fatal plan—a lack of real toughness," he told *Sports Illustrated*. "He's been winning so long he doesn't know anymore what it is to play a battle to the death."

OH, GOSH! YOGA IN TWENTY MINUTES.
Leo Cullum

Shortly after noon, a housekeeper's voice announced over an intercom, "Victor's lunch is ready. Does he want it?" "No," Niederhoffer replied. "I can't eat lunch with the market like this." He looked at his screens. "Europe got killed," he said to nobody in particular. He was still irked by Morgan Stanley's bearish notice to clients. "If the big brokerage houses are going to make money from commissions, they have to get people selling as well as buying," he said dismissively. Unlike most Wall Street firms, Manchester Trading doesn't have a television in its trading room, partly because Niederhoffer doesn't want to be distracted but also because he can't abide doom-mongering market commentators, like Alan Abelson, a columnist for *Barron's*, the financial weekly, and Robert Prechter, Jr., the publisher of the *Elliot Wave Theorist*. "These people have been bearish since Dow 700," Niederhoffer said angrily. "When the market is going up, they can't get a hearing. But when the market falls they get invited back on. They say it's like 1997, or 1987, or 2002. How about 1907? That was a bad year. Interest rates went up; the market went down by nearly fifty per cent."

Just after one o'clock, the market hit a new low for the day, with the Dow down about a hundred and twenty-five points, and the S. & P. 500 down about fourteen points. It is a strange feature of financial markets that time occasionally seems to speed up. On quiet days, when prices aren't moving much, traders monitor their positions, read the papers, and chat with each other, and it can seem as though an eternity passes before the closing bell sounds. But when the market becomes volatile every move brings with it a fresh opportunity for profit or loss, and each minute can fly by. The mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot, who pioneered the application of chaos theory to financial markets, refers to this phenomenon as the "multifractal nature of trading time."

Niederhoffer turned to Castaldo. "This day is far from over," he said. "Doc, what happens when the market is down twelve points at one o'clock and it has been down significantly the previous two days?" A few minutes later, Castaldo handed him another computer printout. "Most of the time, these computer analyses don't work, but it gives you an anchor," Niederhoffer said as he scanned the sheet. "My checkers teacher said even a bad system is better than no system at all." The data showed that the last time trading seemed to follow the current pattern was between November, 2000, and September, 2002, when there had been eight such three-day periods. In most of these instances, the market had rebounded strongly during the subsequent seventy-two hours. Niederhoffer looked at Owen Wilson. "I'll buy another fifty at eleven-fifty," he said.

Niederhoffer's investment philosophy is based on a belief that over the long term the market goes up, but over the short term it constantly reverses itself. In his books—his second, "Practical Speculation," was published in 2003—he compares the behavior of investors to that of herds of rampaging elephants that retrace their steps over and over. He refers to this pattern as a "LoBagola," after Bata LoBagola, the author of "LoBagola: An African Savage's Own Story," a book published in 1930 describing the customs and wildlife of West Africa. After the book appeared, LoBagola was revealed to be an African-American vaudeville entertainer from Baltimore, the son of a former slave. In a 2004 post on DailySpeculations.com, Niederhoffer wrote, "Regrettably LoBagola was an American con man. . . . Nevertheless, I claim that despite his imposture, the moves back and forth in big markets often follow a LoBagola, and even though, nay especially because, LoBagola was an impostor his name should be given to major moves which would seem to follow a symmetry up and down."

Niederhoffer doesn't claim to be able to say what the Dow or the S. & P. 500 will do next week or next month, but he believes that over shorter periods—hours or days—there are sometimes predictable patterns that can be exploited. In "The Education of a Speculator," he devotes an entire chapter to this notion, comparing the market's movements to some of his favorite pieces of classical music, and juxtaposing pages of sheet music with stock charts. "When the markets are moving in my favor in a nice, gentle way—never below my initial price—I often think of the 'Trout Quintet,' " he writes. "Another frequent work I hear in the market is Haydn's Symphony No. 94. . . . Right after lunch, or before a holiday, the markets have a tendency to meander up and down in a five-point range above and below the opening. The pattern is similar to the twinkling C-major fifths of Haydn's symphony."

In the early eighties, when he was making a presentation to potential clients, Niederhoffer sometimes took along Robert Schrade, a friend who was a classical pianist. After Niederhoffer talked about his methods, Schrade would demonstrate the rhythms of the market on the piano. This double act didn't always impress investors. "CalPERS"—the California Public Employees' Retirement System—"is not going to be interested in investing with Victor, nor is the Harvard endowment," Paul DeRosa, a partner at the hedge fund Mt. Lucas who has known Niederhoffer since the late seventies, said to me. "Your basic, buttoned-down endowment, advised by professional consultants, wouldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole. His is a fund that is going to appeal to people like him: self-made people who have a maverick streak."

A few months ago, after visiting a Redwood forest in Northern California, Niederhoffer became fascinated by the ecology of trees. He bought several books on the subject and posted an article on his Web site applying what he had learned about trees to the stock market:

> Lesson Two: The forest thrives and benefits after many seemingly disastrous events. Fires clear the underbrush. Dead trees still standing provide cover for much flora and fauna. Trees contain so much water that there is still much biomass left when they die, and they contain the nutrients and moisture that other plants or fungi need for survival. This situation is called a biological legacy by the scientists, but is just known as a gift by the laymen.
>
> The number of, the amount of time in between, and the extent of watershed declines that the market has witnessed in the last year, as well as the resilience of the market to these declines, is a good measure of the health of a system. It is often good for future growth, to see decimated parts of the market

DINER
TODAY'S SPECIALS
2 EGGS ANY STYLE
2 EGGS TOAST & BACON
2 EGGS BACON SAUSAGE
3-EGG OMELET
Joy
Nick Downes

"I'm sorry, but this coffee is weak-bodied, unfolds into an unremarkable character, and concludes with a rather flat finish."

> landscape, such as the U.S. real-estate sector, which has currently taken it on the chin, or the Saudi Arabian market, which is down 75%.

After he wrote the article, Niederhoffer gave the books he had read to one of his employees, Charles Pennington, a former professor of physics, and asked him to develop precise numerical analogies between the life cycles of forests and those of corporations, in the hope that the exercise might suggest some profitable investments. Niederhoffer's employees are used to such requests. "Things sometimes work that you wouldn't believe, and things don't work that you would expect to work," Steve Wisdom said to me after we had left Niederhoffer at his desk and gone downstairs to eat lunch in his formal dining room. (The dining room is next to the library, where Niederhoffer keeps his collection of rare books and manuscripts, including a first edition of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" and a copy of David Ricardo's "Principles of Political Economy and Taxation" which has margin notes by Thomas Malthus.)

Wisdom, a clean-cut man of forty-six, met Niederhoffer twenty-five years ago, in New York City, when Wisdom was a philosophy major at Harvard and the chairman of the university's Libertarian Club. "We hit it off, and that was that," Wisdom recalled. After graduating, in 1983, Wisdom worked for Niederhoffer for fourteen years, until Niederhoffer's business collapsed, in 1997. He returned in 2003, largely, he told me, because of Niederhoffer's willingness to try new ideas. "Everyone has computers; everyone has Ukrainian math Ph.D.s," Wisdom said. "There are people chopping at the data every which way. Making money is not easy, and it requires a lot of creativity. Victor always says, 'Suppose I didn't know anything. Suppose I'd never traded this instrument before. What would I think?' "

Manchester Trading's three hedge funds are relatively small by current standards. At the end of June, the funds' collective value was about three hundred and fifty million dollars, of which about half belonged to Niederhoffer and Wisdom. In 2003 and 2004, the funds increased in value by more than forty per cent each year, and in 2005 the value of the largest fund, Matador, rose fifty-six per cent—a performance that earned Niederhoffer an industry award. Last year, his funds were flat. But in the first six months of 2007 they were up again, by between thirty and forty per cent.

Niederhoffer acknowledges that his aggressive investing style and his reliance on borrowed money increase the volatility of his returns and the likelihood that he will suffer a calamity. In May, 2006, Matador lost about thirty per cent of its value, and in February of this year it suffered another big fall. Many hedge funds claim that they can generate high returns with little risk. Niederhoffer tells friends who want to invest money with him that it is too risky. (Most of his clients are multimillionaires and financial institutions.) "The idea that you can make a lot of wealth in a steady, unspectacular fashion, with no great gyrations, is a canard," he said to me. "If you are going to try and make forty or fifty per cent a year, tremendous variations are inevitable."

At three o'clock, when Wisdom and I went back upstairs, Niederhoffer was outside playing tennis with one of his traders, Duncan Coker. Soon, however, he returned, sitting down at his desk in a T-shirt, tennis shorts, and sneakers, ignoring the no-shoes rule. "The market's supposed to go up from three until the close," he said. "Let's see if it does."

AUBADE IN AUTUMN

This morning, from under the floorboards
of the room in which I write,
Lawrence the handyman is singing the blues
in a soft falsetto as he works, the words
unclear, though surely one of them is *love*,
lugging its shadow of sadness into song.
I don't want to think about sadness;
there's never a lack of it.
I want to sit quietly for a while
and listen to my father making
a joyful sound unto his mirror
as he shaves—slap of razor
against the strop, the familiar rasp of his voice
singing his favorite hymn, but faint now,
coming from so far back in time:
Oh, come to the church in the wildwood . . .
my father, who had no faith, but loved
how the long, ascending syllable of *wild*
echoed from the walls in celebration
as the morning opened around him . . .
as now it opens around me, the light shifting
in the leaf-fall of the pear tree and across
the bedraggled back-yard roses
that I have been careless of
but brighten the air, nevertheless.
Who am I, if not one who listens
for words to stir from the silences they keep?
Love is the ground note; we cannot do
without it or the sorrow of its changes.
Come to the wildwood, love,
Oh, to the wiiildwood as the morning deepens,
and from a branch in the cedar tree a small bird
quickens his song into the blue reaches of heaven—
hey sweetie sweetie hey.

—*Peter Everwine*

While Wisdom and I were having lunch, the Dow had stabilized and Niederhoffer had sold some of the stock futures he had purchased earlier in the day. "The worst mistake in this business is to be in over your head," he said. "I was long about seventy-five million dollars. In addition to that, I had my regular option position. So I took the opportunity to reduce my exposure."

In addition to speculating on short-term market movements, Niederhoffer frequently sells financial contracts, called "put options," which, in the event of a steep fall in the market, would oblige him to pay out large sums of money. The buyers of these options are usually other investors seeking to hedge their positions, and in a sense Niederhoffer acts like an insurance company: in return for a premium—the price of the option—he agrees to bear the risk of a market crash. Often, this is a good business; but whenever the market enters a volatile period he is in peril. ("He is his own worst enemy," Nassim Taleb, the author and derivatives trader, says of Niederhoffer. "One of the most brilliant men I have ever met, and he wastes his time selling options—something nobody can have any skill in—and it leaves him vulnerable to blowing up.")

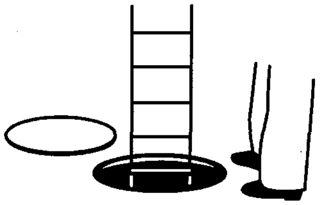
As 4 P.M.—the close of trading—approached, the Dow was again down, by about a hundred and twenty points. Niederhoffer didn't seem particularly discouraged, though. He thought that he discerned a LoBagola pattern. "It's going to be very bullish for tomorrow," he said. "It will be the first one-hundred-point drop in sixteen hundred points. I'm going to buy some more futures."

Niederhoffer's theories about market behavior date to his college years. In 1964, when he was a senior at Harvard, he wrote a thesis on stock-market patterns. At the time, the so-called "efficient market hypothesis," which states that stock prices move randomly and therefore can't be predicted, was coming into vogue. Niederhoffer, citing data on trading volumes and subsequent price movements, claimed to have found evidence that contradicted the random model. His argument didn't fully convince his adviser, the economist Robert Dorfman, but it helped earn him admission to the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, where he enrolled in September, 1964.

At Chicago, Niederhoffer wrote several research papers arguing that it was possible to detect predictable movements in the stock market. He uncovered evidence, for example, that the market tended to do worse on Mondays than on Fridays. Several members of the faculty had helped to develop the efficient market hypothesis, and Niederhoffer's relationships with his professors were often contentious. At one seminar, he later recalled, "I criticized all those who had concluded that markets were random, including most of the professors in the room, as being too heavy-handed in their testing methods to uncover the structure of price variations. Further, I cautioned them that their failure to disprove a hypothesis that no structure existed was methodologically inadequate to support a conclusion that prices were random. When I put it in the vernacular, 'You can't prove a negative,' pandemonium broke loose."

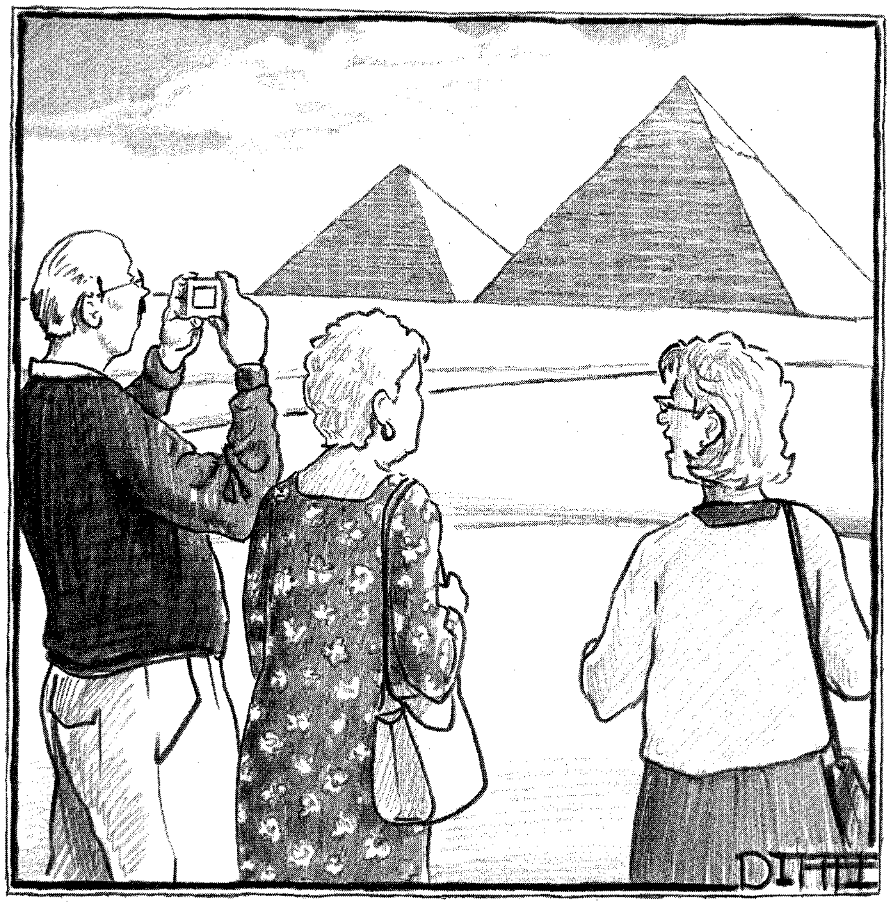
Niederhoffer was an early proponent of what is now called behavioral economics, and his unorthodox theories made him something of an academic celebrity. In 1969, he was hired at Berkeley as an assistant professor, and several hundred students signed up for his course on finance. Three years later, enrollment had dropped precipitately. "I wasn't too good at it, frankly," he told me. "I was not a very good teacher, and I had my own ideas about things. I was earning nine thousand dollars a year. I was playing squash, doing research, dabbling in business. It was all too much."

Niederhoffer had also married—Gail Herman, a graduate of Bryn Mawr whom he met at the wedding of a Harvard friend, the economist Richard Zeckhauser. In the early seventies, Gail and Niederhoffer, who had decided to leave academe, moved to New York, where he started an investment-banking firm that sought out small, family-owned companies and helped sell them to bigger, public companies. The venture proved so successful that before long Niederhoffer and a partner, Dan Grossman, started buying and operating businesses themselves. Among the firms they acquired were American Almond, a Brooklyn company that provided almond paste to bakeries, and Tech Com Inc., a Florida defense contractor that built navigation equipment for planes and ships. "I would run the companies. Victor would visit them every two years or so, and cause havoc," Grossman, a lawyer by training, recalled recently. "He'd say something like 'What this company needs is sales. No more research, no more secretarial duties—I want you all out there selling things.' Then he'd leave, and I'd say, 'Don't take any notice of what he said. That's just Victor being Victor.'"



By the late seventies, Niederhoffer and Gail had two daughters: Galt, who was named after Francis Galton, the Victorian polymath who helped to develop regression analysis and coined the term "eugenics"; and Katie. In 1981, Niederhoffer and Gail separated, and he began dating his assistant, Susan Cole, whom he married in 1991. They have four daughters: Rand, Victoria, Artemis, and Kira. The mother of Niederhoffer's son, Aubrey, who is one and a half, is Laurel Kenner, a former editor at Bloomberg whom he met in 1999. "My personal life is more complicated than Rupert Murdoch's," Niederhoffer joked to me. (Murdoch has six children from three marriages.)

Niederhoffer began investing seriously in the stock market when Galt and Katie were young. In 1979, using money he had saved, he started trading more or less full time and opened an office in midtown. "I got lucky," he told me. "In eighteen months, I ran fifty thousand dollars up to twenty million dollars. I had an idea that there was going to be inflation, so I kept selling Treasury bonds and buying gold and silver. For a long time, it worked very well. Then one day I was playing racquetball in Staten Island with a guy who subsequently became the U.S. champion. After the first game, I called the office to see where the market was. The price of gold had fallen from eight hundred and fifty dollars to six hundred dollars in an hour. My net



"Yeah, but the one in Vegas has an endless shrimp buffet."

worth had gone down to ten million dollars.

"That was where my Brighton Beach training came in," Niederhoffer went on. "I'd seen a lot of gamblers die broke. My father used to say I'd end up on the Bowery, like the other gamblers. I'd say, 'Dad, I've got a system.' He'd say, 'Baloney. Those guys on the Bowery had more statistics and systems than you've got.' I took what he said seriously. I told my assistant, who later became my second wife, 'If I ever lose more than half my stake, close out all my positions. Don't let me trade anymore.' I went back to my match. During the second game, she sold everything. By then, my ten million dollars had dwindled to five million, but at least I got out with that much."

Wall Street in the late seventies was much less technologically sophisticated than it is today. "If you could solve two equations in two unknowns, you were a high-tech person," Paul DeRosa recalled. "Someone with Victor's quantitative skills was a rare bird. In the early years, that gave him a big advantage." In 1981, George Soros, who was by then a wealthy investor but who was having a bad year, heard about Niederhoffer's reputed ability to predict short-term market movements and arranged to meet him at his office. Soros left the meeting impressed, and gave Niederhoffer some money to manage. The men shared an intellectual fascination with markets, and they became close, talking on the phone nearly every day, and playing tennis or chess several times a week. "My father had just passed away," Niederhoffer recalled. "George was struggling. He needed a ledge to give him some purchase. I provided that."

By the mid-eighties, Niederhoffer was managing many of Soros's investments in bonds and commodities, which were worth hundreds of millions of dollars. On Tuesday, October 20, 1987, a day after the Dow dropped five hundred and eight points, Niederhoffer and Soros played tennis, as usual. Both men had lost a lot of money in the crash, and Niederhoffer had trouble concentrating; Soros, however, was calm. Don't worry, he told Niederhoffer, the market will reopen tomorrow, and there will be plenty of opportunities to make back our losses.

Over the next several years, Niederhoffer's funds yielded an annual average return of about thirty per cent, which put them near the top of the industry. In 1994, *Business Week* named him the best commodities-fund manager in the country. A year later, he started two new hedge funds: Niederhoffer Investments and Niederhoffer International Markets. For a while, he hardly slept. During the day, he traded stocks and currencies in Europe and the United States, and at night he bought and sold Japanese yen. He also invested in emerging markets, making successful plays in Turkish bonds and Mexican stocks.

Toward the end of 1996, another profitable year for him, Niederhoffer decided that he wanted to invest in Southeast Asia, which was widely seen as a growing market. He dispatched an old friend, Steven (Bo) Keeley, to the region. Keeley, a veterinarian who spent six months of the year living in the California desert without a telephone or electric power, had trekked in dozens of countries. On one trip, while paddling down the Amazon, he had contracted malaria, briefly gone blind, and been comatose for a week. Keeley believed that assessing a developing country's economic prospects involved not only meeting with the C.E.O.s of leading companies but studying the lengths of discarded cigarettes—the theory being that the wealthier people are, the longer their butts—and the state of the brothels. After a couple of months in Asia, he reported to Niederhoffer that the brothels in Bangkok had recently become much cleaner and safer, and that Thailand was an excellent place to invest. During the previous decade, the Thai economy had grown at an annual rate of almost ten per cent; its interest rates were among the lowest of any country in the region; and its stocks were cheap because they had fallen sharply earlier in the year. In the spring of 1997, Niederhoffer invested several hundred million dollars in Thailand. Instead of buying stocks in some of the country's biggest companies, he entered into complicated deals with Wall Street firms to buy futures contracts that were tied to the value of Thai stocks. The margin requirements for futures purchases are much lower than those for stock purchases, so he was able to put up a relatively modest amount of cash, while using borrowed money to accumulate substantial holdings.

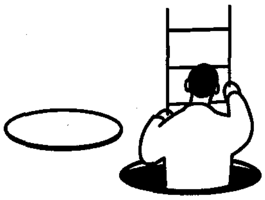
His timing was atrocious. In May and June, a wave of selling swept through the Asian financial markets, and Thailand was especially hard hit. Many overseas investors tried to repatriate their money, and the Thai government started to run out of foreign-exchange reserves. On July 2nd, it was forced to abandon what amounted to a fixed exchange rate between the baht and the dollar, which had been in place for more than a decade. The Thai currency collapsed, and so did the stock market. The value of many of Niederhoffer's Thai holdings dropped by more than ninety per cent. His lenders demanded that he put up more collateral. In order to meet their demands, he was forced to sell many of his profitable investments, which left his funds severely depleted. "We were like someone who is immune-deficient," Steve Wisdom recalled. "We had lost so much money that we had no resistance left to other maladies."

Apart from his Thai holdings, Niederhoffer's most substantial investments were in the American futures markets. At first, the U.S. market weathered the Asian crisis pretty well, but in the fall of 1997 it became more volatile. On October 27, 1997, the Dow fell by more than five hundred points, and, for the first time in recent history, the market closed early. Amid widespread panic, Niederhoffer fielded calls from lenders. Some, including Refco, a large commodities broker, demanded that he give them more money to support his options positions. Niederhoffer was unable to come up with the cash, and the next morning Refco liquidated his portfolio.

"It was a very poor decision on my part to invest in Thailand," Niederhoffer told me. "I had no scientific basis for investing there. In the U.S. market, there is evidence that it is a good time to invest after a big fall. In Thailand, there was no such statistical evidence. It was purely a qualitative idea. I'd seen Soros do that a lot of times and make a lot of money, but it didn't work for me. Previously, I had had two or three qualitative ideas that made money—Turkish bonds, Mexican stocks—and it lured me into a false sense of security."

We were sitting on a bench outside a building in the East Fifties, where Laurel Kenner lives and Niederhoffer stays when he visits. He was drinking a bottle of organic lemonade. I asked him whether hubris had contributed to his downfall. "Yeah, I'd say," he replied. "In those days, we always wanted to be No. 1 in the ratings. There was a Canadian firm, Friedberg—they were having a good year, and we wanted to keep up with them. It was always nip and tuck between us and them." Niederhoffer was silent for a moment. Then he spoke quickly: "You asked for reasons—I could name another ten. We had no stops. We picked the wrong country to invest in. We were too illiquid. We had too big a percentage of the market, and we didn't have the ability to get out of our positions. We were too financially vulnerable to the brokers. I didn't take account of the fact that I could be squeezed and that customers could withdraw their money. But mainly I didn't have a proper foundation for my investment there. I had no knowledge of the country. I'd never even visited the country. All I had done was finance a trip by Bo Keeley to the brothels there."

After his funds folded, Niederhoffer fell into a deep depression. His eldest daughter, Galt, a film producer and novelist who is thirty-one and lives in Manhattan, recalls coaxing him to Long Island for a walk on a beach, where he knelt on the sand like a zombie. "It wasn't just depression," she said. "It was self-hatred and hopelessness. He felt like he had let people down. It was so shameful. This was a guy who grew up in a modest house, the son of a cop. Imagine what it would be like to create all of those things for your family and then to lose them."



Niederhoffer had managed to retain some of his assets. He mortgaged his house in Connecticut and sold a collection of trophy and presentation silver and some of his rare books, which enabled him to pay off his creditors. He used this period of enforced inactivity to reconsider his approach to investing and to retool his pattern-recognition software. After about six months, using several hundred thousand dollars of his own money, he started trading again. "I had no brokerage account—no broker would do business with me under ordinary terms," he said. "No customers would open a new account with me." In 1999 and 2000 he did well, and in 2002 he started Matador, an offshore hedge fund. Its biggest investor was Octane, a hedge fund based in Switzerland, whose chief investment officer, Mustafa Zaidi, is an old friend of Niederhoffer's.

At the beginning, Matador had less than ten million dollars to invest. In its second year, the fund had a return of forty-one per cent, and Niederhoffer's renewed success helped him attract more money, including some from former clients who had lost their investments in 1997. (For these investors, he waived the hefty fees that hedge funds normally charge.) Eventually, he had enough cash to open two more funds. In February, 2003, Niederhoffer published "Practical Speculation," a manual for serious investors, which he co-wrote with Laurel Kenner, whom he had been dating for several years. That year, he separated from his wife, Susan, and in 2004 he and Kenner launched DailySpeculations.com, which they dedicated to "the scientific method, free markets, deflating ballyhoo, creating value, and laughter."

The Web site has since evolved into an informal social-networking site for speculators and aspiring speculators. "I met a lot of my friends through the site," James Lackey, the trader who once worked with Niederhoffer and who posts regularly on the site, said. "Victor is like the hub where the wheels of speculation turn. He's the center of so many of our relationships—we call him the Chairman. He's the guy who keeps everyone in line."

In April, 2006, Niederhoffer attended a dinner at the St. Regis Hotel, where MARHedge, a company that published a newsletter for the hedge-fund industry, presented him with an award as the top manager in the commodity-fund category. "What I'm proudest of is that we've made several hundred million dollars after fees," Niederhoffer said to me in July. "We've returned a lot more money to our investors than they have invested."

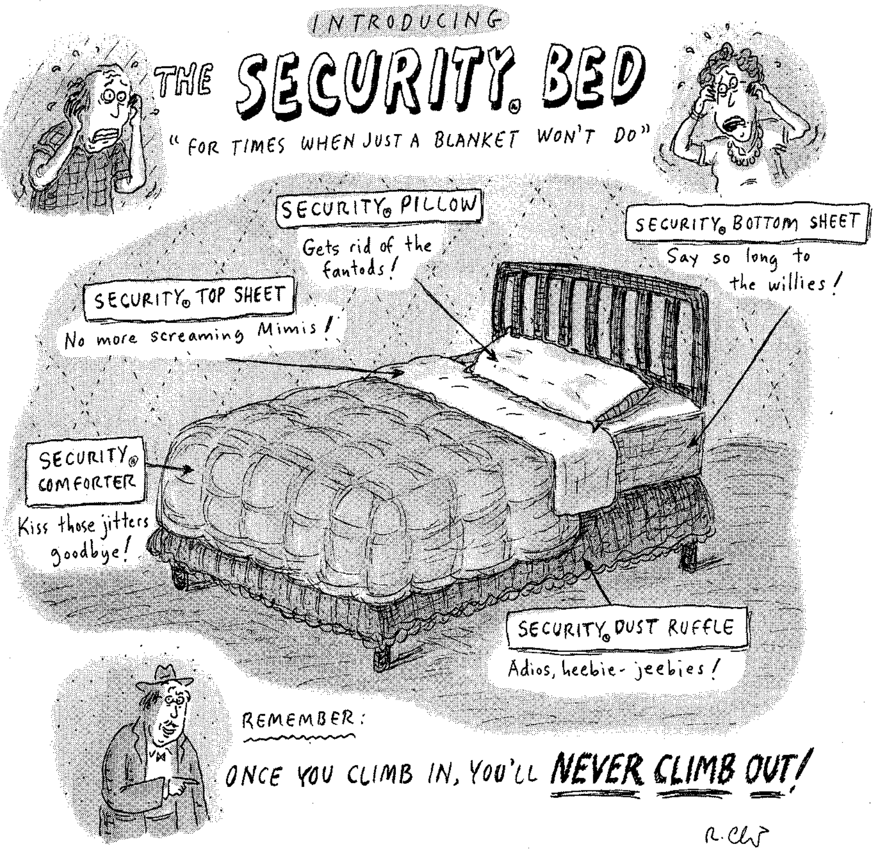
As Niederhoffer and his funds prospered, it appeared to many of his old friends and colleagues that he had finally become a master speculator. "It is impossible to go through what Victor went through without it altering what you do," Paul DeRosa told me in July. "It made him more conscious of risk, more attuned to it. It was an expensive education, but the important thing is that it wasn't wasted." Irving Redel, a former gold and silver trader and chairman of the New York Commodities Exchange, who was a mentor to Niederhoffer in his Wall Street days, said, "To be a great trader you need discipline. You have to have certain strategies that you follow, but you also have to have the flexibility to know when it is going wrong. And you have to know to never go beyond what you can afford to lose." I asked Redel whether Niederhoffer has these qualities. He replied, "He does now."

On the first Thursday of every month, Niederhoffer hosts a meeting of libertarians at the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, on West Forty-fourth Street. One Thursday evening in early June, about seventy people were gathered in the society's library, listening to an elderly woman in a white hat, who stood at a lectern talking enthusiastically about Christopher Hitchens's book "God Is Not Great." A middle-aged man with a beard spoke next, urging the others to accompany him on a walking tour he hosted called Ayn Rand's New York, in which he visited local buildings where Rand had lived and held objectivist salons, as well as sites—the Waldorf-Astoria, Grand Central Terminal—that served as inspirations for places in her novel "Atlas Shrugged."

The meetings are open to the public, and Niederhoffer, who was sitting on a table at the back of the room, swinging his legs, encourages each person to speak. He calls these sessions the New York City Junto, after the discussion group that Benjamin Franklin founded in Philadelphia in 1727, which held meetings for thirty years and eventually became the American Philosophical Society. Niederhoffer's Junto is more casual, but he takes libertarianism seriously, considering it to be a natural complement to speculating. As a statement on his Web site puts it, "Victor Niederhoffer believes the purpose of life is the pursuit of happiness and achievement, and that the voluntary transactions that flow naturally out of an enterprise system are the key to material and personal freedom, and peace." In an op-ed article that he published in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1989, he argued that speculators serve several important economic functions. When a good becomes scarce, he said, speculators bid up prices, which encourages firms to produce more and consumers to buy less, and helps to restore balance to the market. "I am proud to be a speculator," Niederhoffer wrote. "I am proud that my humble attempts to predict Tuesday's prices on Monday are an indispensable component of our society. By buying low and selling high, I create harmony and freedom."

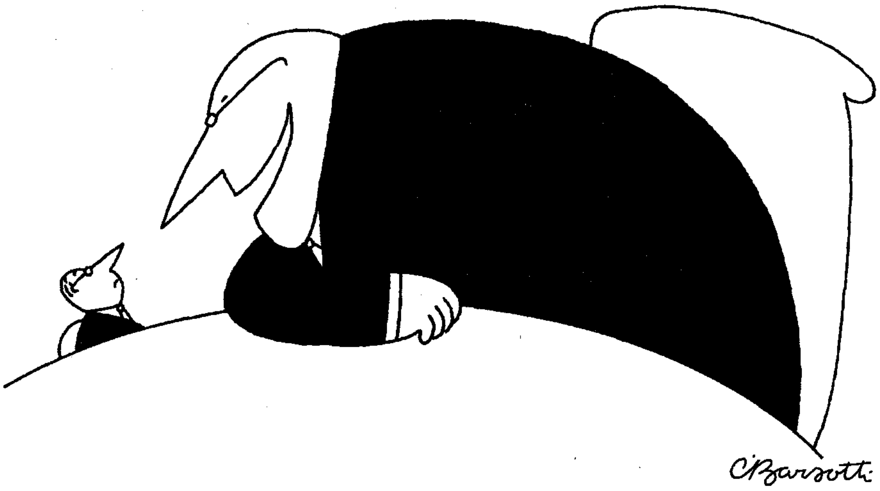
The guest speaker at the meeting was Thomas DiLorenzo, an economics professor at Loyola College, in Maryland, and the author of fourteen books, including "How Capitalism Saved America: The Untold History of Our Country from the Pilgrims to the Present." DiLorenzo's subject was the filmmaker and liberal gadfly Michael Moore. Not having seen Moore's latest movie, "Sicko," DiLorenzo was at something of a disadvantage, but he expressed outrage at Moore's failure, in his previous films, to recognize the importance of competition, the virtues of sweatshops, and the depredations of socialism. At one point, Niederhoffer interrupted him and asked, "What are the general principles?" DiLorenzo replied, "Markets work and government-run monopolies don't."

At least one member of the audience, a gray-haired man, seemed to think that this was going a bit too far. He cited the Federal Home Loan Banks, an agency that makes mortgages more readily available, and the National Park Service. Don't you agree that the government does some things well? the man asked. "No," DiLorenzo replied. "The government has screwed up the national parks.



I think capitalism would do a much better job with land."

Shortly after ten o'clock, Niederhoffer ended the meeting. I was eager to speak to him about the stock market, which had fallen by almost two hundred points that day. "I can't talk about it," he said when I approached him. "It's too painful. I might be able to review it in a few days." He walked across the room to greet Kenner and Aubrey. He put his son on his shoulders and disappeared onto Forty-fourth Street.



"So, Hargrove, are we singing from the same hymnbook?"

On May 3, 2006, the day that Aubrey was born, Niederhoffer's wife, Susan, filed for divorce. As his spouse and the legal owner of many of his assets, which he had transferred to her in 1997, she had claim to much of his fortune. For months, the couple's lawyers argued. Then, in February, Niederhoffer persuaded Susan to drop the divorce proceedings. In return, he agreed to leave Kenner at the end of 2007 and return to her. Then he informed Kenner of the plan.

For now, Niederhoffer shuttles between the women. From Sunday to Tuesday, he and Susan share the house in Connecticut. (Three of their four daughters have left home; the youngest, Kira, attends boarding school.) He spends the rest of the week in Manhattan, with Kenner and Aubrey. "He's emotionally involved with both of those women right now," Galt said to me. "He never really leaves women. Wives become extended-family members, like in-laws, or honorary members of the harem. They tolerate it because he's a flawed genius and a man. They take the good with the bad. It's all I've ever known. All I've ever known is we are weird."

I was having lunch with Galt at a French restaurant near her apartment in Chelsea. Although Aubrey's birth had been a shock to the family, she went on, her father sees his other children regularly, and he is on good terms with his first wife, Gail—Galt's mother—who divides her time between New York and Texas. "We've become kind of like this very functional dysfunctional family," Galt said. "To most people, it is completely abnormal, and yet we've come to have this somewhat wholesome, happy dynamic. All of the girls are close. My mother and Susan have grown very close." Recently, Galt added, she, Gail, Susan, and all her sisters except Artemis, who was away, got together to celebrate the third birthday of her daughter, Magnolia. Laurel was not at the party. "Laurel is another story," Galt said. "Susan and Laurel are not close. There's nothing happy about that."

Last year, Galt published a novel, "A Taxonomy of Barnacles," which she described to me as "an effort to exorcise my demons about living in a family that was different from everybody else's." The novel features an eccentric and domineering businessman who has six daughters and desperately wants a male heir. Eventually, he acquires one in surprising circumstances. Shortly after the book came out, Niederhoffer took Galt to lunch at the Four Seasons and told her that her book had been prescient. "Oh, my God, you have a love child!" Galt blurted out. "No," Niederhoffer said. "I have a son." A few months later, Aubrey was born.

Kenner, who is fifty-three, told me that she is unhappy about Niederhoffer's arrangement with her. "Obviously, there is a lot of anger there," she said. "But it is not just me. There is a baby involved." I expressed surprise that her relationship with Niederhoffer remained cordial. "We had eight great years," she replied. "He gave me so much. I am immeasurably better off on so many levels through meeting Victor. He was the best lover I ever had—not just in sexual terms. We wrote a book together. He is a great, romantic, gentle person."

Niederhoffer declined to discuss his relationship with Susan. As for Kenner, he said, "We've had a very fine collaboration and had much pleasure and happiness together, and we have a wonderful son. We're parents, and we still have mutual respect and admiration for each other." He went on, "We didn't have in mind the ultimate outcome, but we created a fantastic legacy—the baby, the books, and the articles."

On Tuesday, July 17th, the Dow rose above fourteen thousand for the first time. The economy was growing, the long-term interest rate had dropped back to five per cent, and the volatile trading days of early summer seemed largely to have been forgotten. After the market closed, however, Bear Stearns announced that two of its hedge funds, which had investments in securities tied to subprime mortgages, had lost almost all their value. Problems in the subprime market spilled into money markets that banks and other financial institutions rely on to finance their daily activities; several more hedge funds went under; and commentators began to speak of a looming "credit crunch." Stock markets around the world experienced wild fluctuations.

On Tuesday, July 24th, the Dow fell two hundred and twenty-six points. Two days later, it dropped three hundred and eleven points. Commentators on CNBC were making ominous pronouncements. I sent Niederhoffer an e-mail, saying that I hoped he had been well positioned for the market's correction. He replied in three words: "I was not." On Friday, July 27th, the Dow fell another two hundred points, closing four per cent down for the week. The markets were still volatile a week later, when Niederhoffer came into Manhattan for his monthly libertarian meeting. After it ended, we went across the street to a restaurant, where he ordered a cappuccino. He looked pale and haggard, and years older. For several minutes, we sat in silence. Then, in a low voice, he said, "Things have changed totally since we last spoke. The situation is fundamentally different. It is critical." Kenner and Aubrey joined us, but Niederhoffer hardly seemed to notice them. "We are fighting for survival night and day," he said when I pressed him for details. "I was caught wrong-footed in the market turbulence. I'm not as smart as I thought I was."

The previous week, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, in response to the turmoil in the market, had raised its margin requirements on futures traders, a move that was potentially devastating for Niederhoffer, who had hundreds of millions of dollars in options. He had more money in reserve than he had had in 1997, but he was worried. "It's a matter of redeploying resources," he said. "Also, in trying to be courageous in response to the crisis, I put up a lot of my own capital. You remember the story of the Essex and Captain Pollard? We are like a tiny fishing boat off the coast of Alaska that has been caught in the biggest waves in a hundred years."

Talking about his predicament seemed to improve Niederhoffer's mood a little. He ate some sorbet and played with Aubrey. Then he said, "Now I have to go home and work." Kenner got up to leave, straightening her dress and inadvertently exposing a thigh. "Do that again," Niederhoffer commanded. "Do what?" Kenner asked. "Lift it up," he said. "It can keep a man afloat." They both laughed.

During the next two weeks, I tried repeatedly to talk to Niederhoffer. Part of the reason for his reticence was that he feared a leak. Hedge funds depend on access to borrowed money. If lenders learn that a fund is in trouble, they might decide to stop giving it money—which can have disastrous consequences for the fund. On July 30th, Sowood Capital Management, a Boston-based fund, announced that the assets under its management had lost more than fifty per cent of their value in a few weeks, and the fund closed shortly afterward. By mid-August, two funds operated by Goldman Sachs had lost about a third of the value they'd had at the beginning of the year. Goldman decided to invest two billion dollars of its own money in one of the funds, Global Equity Opportunities, and it persuaded several wealthy investors to put up another billion dollars on favorable terms.

The spectacle of one of Wall Street's most profitable firms being forced to shore up one of its flagship funds suggested some of the pressures that Niederhoffer was confronting. In today's interconnected financial markets, there is no such thing as an isolated incident. When a dramatic event occurs in one sector, the effects are felt in others. The Goldman funds were computer-driven funds, and their software programs had failed to predict the size and speed of movements in the stock market. Prices had got "way out of whack," David Viniar, Goldman's chief financial officer, complained. "We were seeing things that were twenty-five standard-deviation moves several days in a row."

Like Niederhoffer's funds, the Goldman funds were heavily leveraged. For every hundred dollars of capital that the Global Equity Opportunities fund owned, it had borrowed about six hundred dollars. When a fund is leveraged six to one, a five-per-cent fall in the value of its portfolio becomes a thirty-per-cent loss in capital. "Leverage is a double-edged sword," Richard Bernstein, an analyst at Merrill Lynch, wrote in a note to clients a few days before Goldman announced its efforts to prop up the Global Opportunities fund. "It enhances returns on the upside, but also makes underperformance more rapid and severe."

Of course, Niederhoffer was aware of these dangers. But, between the middle of 2003 and the start of this year, the financial markets had been mostly calm. Stock prices had gone up, and, atypically, they had done so in a fairly straight line, with only two significant reversals, in May, 2006, and in February, 2007. From Niederhoffer's perspective, the decline in market volatility was a welcome development, because it made his options trading much less risky. With prices steady or rising, he was less likely to be caught on the wrong end of a big market move. As the quiet times continued, many investors were lulled into believing that a less volatile era had begun. Alan Greenspan, who was the chairman of the Fed until February, 2006, helped to feed this illusion by talking about how financial innovations, such as the development of asset-backed securities, had spread risks more widely, making the market less vulnerable to shocks.

The crisis in the subprime-mortgage market changed all this. In the stock market, volatility was more pronounced than it had been for years. Even on days when the Dow closed just a few points down, prices lurched around. On Friday, August 10th, the Dow fell more than two hundred points before recovering at the close. On Thursday, August 16th, it fell almost three hundred and fifty points before closing down just fourteen points. A measure of market turbulence which many traders watch closely is the Chicago Board Options Exchange Volatility Index, known as the VIX. Between January, 2003, and January, 2007, the VIX fell from more than thirty to about ten. By the end of July, it had surged above twenty, and on August 16th, the day before the Fed cut the discount rate, it hit thirty-seven.

The surge in volatility prompted the Chicago Merc to raise its margin requirements for options on S. & P. 500 Index futures twice, first from two per cent to three per cent, and then from three per cent to four per cent. Niederhoffer was asked to double the amount of capital supporting his positions, and he found it difficult to raise the necessary cash. Some of his investments had lost a lot of their value, and the value of others was difficult to determine. There were so many moving parts in his portfolio that he wasn't sure where he stood. When a trader can't meet his margin requirements, he is at the mercy of his creditors. As Niederhoffer's financial situation deteriorated, ADM Investor Services, a Chicago-based brokerage firm that caters to futures traders, ordered him to liquidate some of his options positions. Working late into the night, Niederhoffer berated himself for leaving himself so exposed. Referring to the margin calls, he said to one acquaintance, "I shouldn't have been in the position where it could have had such an impact." Despite the lessons of 1997, and the precautions he had taken, he was again in over his head.

Every August, Niederhoffer throws a big party in New York City, to which he invites dozens of regular contributors to his Web site as well as some of his friends. This year, there were about seventy-five guests. Most were New Yorkers, but some had come from as far away as England. For three days, Niederhoffer entertained them at his expense. On Friday, he organized a trip to the New York Botanical Garden and to a Mets game. On Saturday, he hosted a beach outing at Coney Island and a dinner at Delmonico's, near Wall Street. On Sunday, he provided a picnic brunch in Central Park's Conservatory Garden.

As the crisis in the market spread, Niederhoffer had briefly considered cancelling the party, but he decided that to do so would have alerted people to his troubles. At three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, I saw him in the crowd on the boardwalk at Coney Island, across from the Cyclone roller coaster. As usual, he wasn't difficult to spot: he was wearing yellow trousers and a yellow T-shirt that said "Chief Speculator" on the back. On the beach, his staff had set up a blue canopy, and about a dozen people had gathered underneath it, taking shelter from the sun.

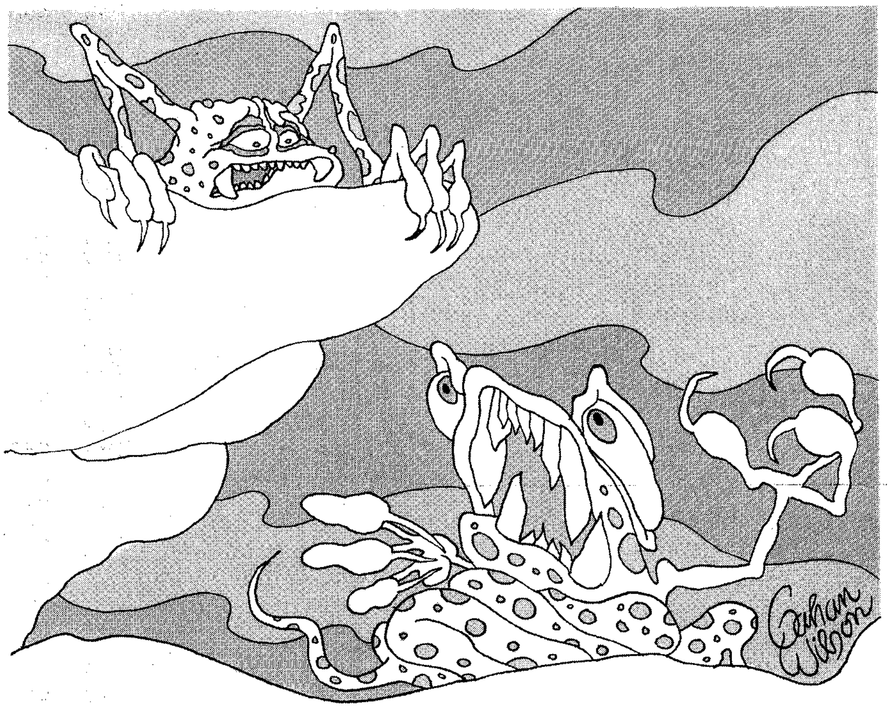
Niederhoffer had Aubrey on his shoulders, and he seemed to be in a better mood than when I had last seen him. He makes frequent visits to Coney Island and Brighton Beach; the house he lived in as a boy was about half a mile east of where we were standing. "We are going on the Wonder Wheel," Niederhoffer said, gesturing over his shoulder at the slowly turning Ferris wheel, which dates to 1920. While he was gone, I spoke with two of his guests, a young Liberian M.B.A. student who said that he had recently posted an article on DailySpeculations.com about gambling on thoroughbred racing, and an older Frenchman who traded stocks at a Wall Street firm. The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed. None of the guests mentioned Niederhoffer's financial predicament.

At 6 P.M., the party reconvened at Delmonico's, which Niederhoffer had reserved for the evening. After cocktails in the dark-panelled bar, his guests entered the ornate dining room, where a Broadway tap dancer and a family of Hawaiian singers performed. I was seated next to Laurel Kenner and Aubrey, but didn't see much of Niederhoffer, who was wearing a lilac jacket and spent most of the evening table-hopping. After dessert was served, he stood up to speak.

"This is a historic gathering," he said, swaying slowly back and forth. "We are here in the middle of one of the greatest turmoils in Wall Street history. I am sure that many of you are keen to know how we are doing. Well, I can tell you that it has been very difficult. The battle has been joined, and it is still to be determined who the victor is. I always say that when you are in the middle of one of these situations it is better to say nothing. If you say you are doing badly, it gives ammunition to your enemies. If you say you are doing well, you are tempting fate. . . . We will see what happens and who wins the final point."

Later in August, after the Federal Reserve cut the discount rate—the rate at which it lends to banks—the markets calmed down; but Niederhoffer's woes continued. In September, he was forced to close two of his funds, including his flagship, Matador, which had declined in value by more than seventy-five per cent. After cashing out many of his investments, Niederhoffer repaid his lenders and returned what money was leftover to his clients. He laid off several employees and consulted with his lawyers. Meanwhile, rumors circulated on the Internet that, for the second time in a decade, his funds had "blown up."

Had he been able to wait a little longer before liquidating his trades, his funds might have recouped most of the losses. After the Federal Reserve cut interest rates again, on September 18th, the stock market rallied further and volatility decreased. Still, Niederhoffer sounded philosophical. "The market was not as liquid as I anticipated," he said. "The movements in volatility were greater than I had anticipated. We were prepared for many different contingencies, but this kind of one we were not prepared for." Niederhoffer was still trading for his own account, and for some remaining clients. "My basic ideas about the creative power of the market, buying in panics, buying on weakness—I don't think what has happened has anything to do with that stuff," he said. "I am going to keep going, for better or worse." ♦



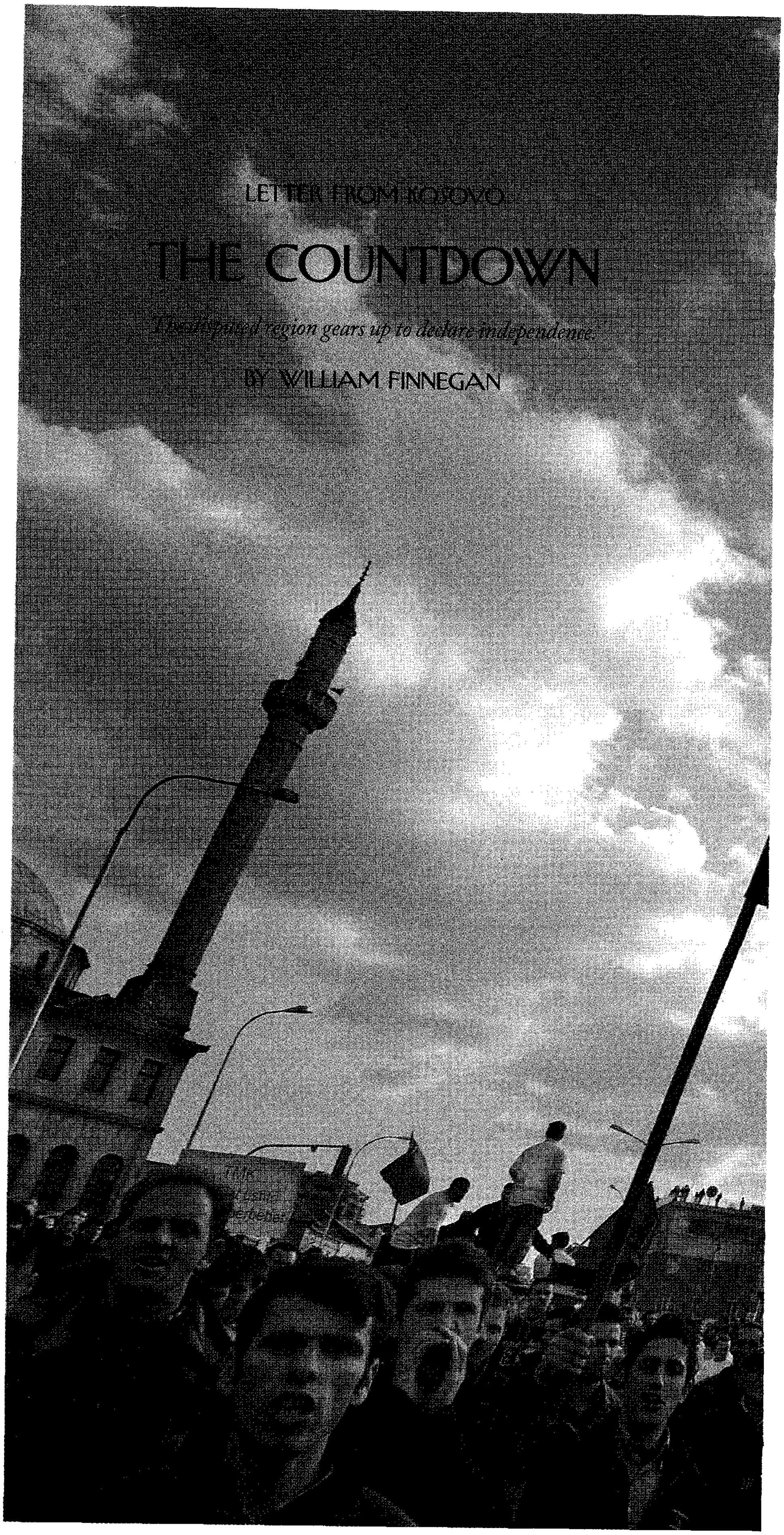
"Sorry—I didn't realize you were another predator."

LETTER FROM KOSOVO

THE COUNTDOWN

The disputed region gears up to declare independence.

BY WILLIAM FINNEGAN



Kosovo Albanian protesters in Pristina, March 3, 2007. Some four thousand demonstrator

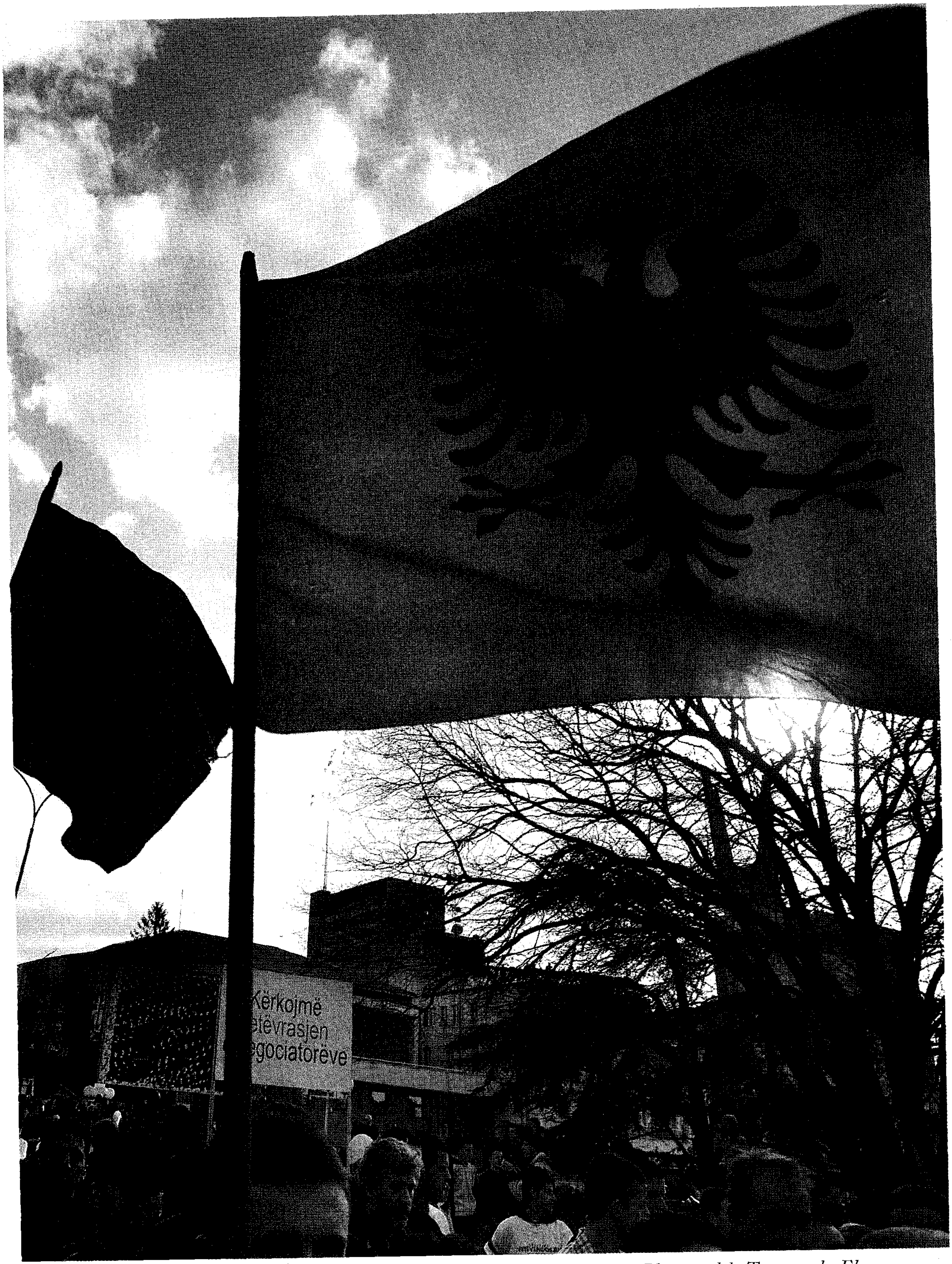
POLARIS

Early in the morning on May 14, 1999, a large force of Serbian paramilitaries, soldiers, and special police appeared in Qyshk, a farming village in western Kosovo. The Serbs had come to Qyshk before, searching for weapons and valuables, but this time they herded the residents, all ethnic Albanians, toward the center of the village. They said that they were looking for Hasan Ceku, the father of General Agim Ceku, the chief of staff of the Kosovo Liberation Army. This was at the height of the war between the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's forces and the K.L.A., and seven weeks after NATO had entered the conflict, bombing Belgrade and other parts of Yugoslavia in an attempt to halt Milosevic's brutal campaign against Kosovo's Albanian majority. Hasan Ceku, who was sixty-nine years old, came forward, according to an eyewitness. To prove who he was, he produced a picture of his son Agim. "They shot Hasan right there, and set him on fire," another witness said. The Serbs also killed Agim's uncle Kadri Ceku.

The Serbs beat the villagers with rifle butts and stabbed them with hunting knives, demanding information about the K.L.A., according to reconstructions of the events by Human Rights Watch and two American radio reporters. They singled out Qaush Lushi, the richest man in town. One Serb, according to a witness, asked Lushi, "Do you want a state? We are eleven million Serbs, so if you want a state ask for help from Clinton and Blair. Ask for NATO's help now." Lushi said, "We have a state." Lushi gave the Serbs his car and ten thousand Deutsche marks, in the hope that they would spare his twenty-year-old son, Arjan. Still, they killed both men. Lushi's wife, Ajsha, found his body in an outhouse; one hand had been nearly severed in an effort to remove his watch.

The Serbs separated the rest of Qyshk's men from their families, lined them up, and machine-gunned them. Then they burned the bodies. Forty-one people were killed in Qyshk that morning. Hasan Ceku was the oldest; the youngest was nineteen.

Qyshk sits in a lush stretch of the Bistrica River Valley, near the main road running from Pristina, Kosovo's capital, to the western city of Peja. A low marble monument in the village lists the names


Kërkojmë
etëvrasjen
egociatorëve

marched past the headquarters of the U.N. Mission demanding independence from Serbia. Photograph by Taco van der Eb.

"Do you realize we still have a huge bag of leaves from last year?"

of the victims of the massacre. Not far away stands the whitewashed hut, still used by the Ceku family, where Hasan's nine children were born. His son Agim, the K.L.A. commander, is now the Prime Minister of Kosovo. Given the number of Kosovo Albanians killed in the war with the Serbs—it is estimated that ten thousand died, and bodies were found in mass graves far away in Serbia—it is perhaps not surprising that Ceku's family was victimized. What I found strange was that no one outside of Qyshk seemed to know that the Prime Minister's father had been executed by the Serbs.

When I met with Ceku recently, I asked him why he never talked about the murder of his father. We were sitting in his office in a new government building in Pristina. A few blocks away stood the shattered seven-story hulk of Milosevic's old police headquarters—bombed, looted, and wreathed in hanging rebar. Ceku, a big, rawboned forty-seven-year-old career soldier with a buzz cut and a frank gaze, looked at me. "My father was killed because he was my father," he said finally. Then he added, "He has *his* name."

I took that to mean that his father's life had a completeness of its own, which it was not the son's place to traduce. Ceku went on, a bit stiffly, "I consider it not fair that I should try to get some benefit from my father." Anyway, he conceded, in postwar Kosovo such plays for sympathy could backfire. "Somebody else lost children," he said. "That's worse than losing a father."

He also admitted that, in certain private conversations, he wasn't so restrained. "Maybe sometimes, in arguments with Serbs, I use it," he said. "I say, 'Look, my father was killed. But leave it. We are now invited to build a better future. It happened to everybody. It happened to you. It happened to me. I'm here to talk about the future, not to sit and argue about who suffered more.' "

Eight years after NATO drove out the Serbian forces, Kosovo remains in a quasi-colonial limbo. It is legally a province of Serbia and effectively a protectorate of the United Nations, and there are still sixteen thousand peacekeepers deployed, from thirty-four countries. Kosovo Albanians, who make up ninety per cent of the population, have grown increasingly impatient with "the internationals." They want, overwhelmingly, independence. Kosovo—poor, predominantly Muslim, and a reputed stronghold of the Albanian Mafia—is frequently portrayed, not least by Belgrade, as a criminal enterprise masquerading as a nation, a potential Al Qaeda beachhead, or a failed state in the making. The fear often expressed is that an independent Kosovo might become "a black hole in the middle of Europe."

The U.N. Mission in the province has conducted four rounds of elections since 2000, with the result that Kosovo now has, at least in name, a parliament and its trappings. The government's powers are limited, but, with the framework of a state in place, it seems increasingly likely that Kosovo will simply declare independence unilaterally. Independence for Kosovo is supported by all the major European powers and, most strongly, by the United States; it is fiercely opposed by Serbia and is being blocked in the U.N. Security Council by the Russians, who are the Serbs' traditional allies.

"The chances of violence are very high here," Richard Holbrooke, President Clinton's special envoy to Kosovo in the late nineties, told me. He described the current situation as "a fast-approaching diplomatic train wreck," and said that he expects a declaration of independence by the end of this year. The U.S. has agreed to recognize the new state, but the European Union will likely be divided on the issue, and, according to Holbrooke, "may cut off aid, which will be catastrophic."

Last year, when Ceku became Prime Minister, he was the most popular man in Kosovo. He was expected to be the leader who would, at last, shepherd Kosovo to independence. Instead, he has presided over a series of missed deadlines. In late April, he told the *International Herald Tribune*, "I expect to be able to declare independence by the end of May." Nicholas Burns, the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, seemed to say the same thing two weeks later in Zagreb, foreseeing "the independence of Kosovo by the end of this month." But Washington wasn't really promising anything. It was, as a U.N. officer in Kosovo told me, "signalling" something. Ceku hadn't understood the difference.

Ceku is not a politician. He is a military man who finds himself vacillating between defiant demands for progress and obsequious deference to Kosovo's powerful "partners." "It is frustrating," Ceku told me. The U.N. Mission has "absolute authority" but "the internationals are not doing all they can," he said.

"It's not the same when you're doing something for someone else. We'll do a better job for ourselves, because we'll be doing it for our children."

The tension between national pride and international supervision in Kosovo has become as pervasive as the tension between ethnic Albanians and Serbs. In 2004, widespread rioting broke out. It was mostly reported as mob attacks on the remaining Serb and Roma minorities, and it certainly was: nineteen people were killed and nine hundred injured, and the homes of more than seven hundred Serbs and other minorities were destroyed, along with thirty Orthodox churches and two monasteries; rampaging schoolchildren burned down a medieval convent and took a nun hostage. But the anger and violence were also clearly directed at the U.N., which lost scores of vehicles and was lucky not to lose any people.

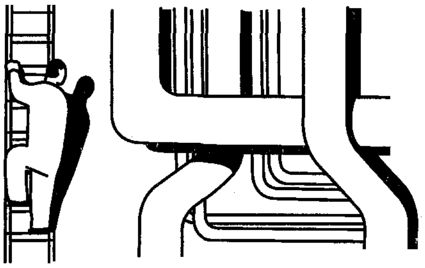
One of the reasons that Agim Ceku is so widely admired in Kosovo is that, even though he came from an ordinary village background, he had a successful Yugoslav military career. Before the breakup of Yugoslavia, eighty per cent of the officer corps was Serbian, and ethnic-Albanian commanders were almost unknown. Ceku, after graduating from the national military academy with highest honors, was stationed in the seaside town of Zadar, which is now in Croatia. He married a half-Serbian, half-Croatian woman, Dragica. (They have three children, and the family now divides its time between Pristina and Zadar.) In 1991, when Croatia declared its independence, Serbian paramilitary units went to war there, and Ceku cast his lot with the Croatian Army. He rose to the rank of brigadier general, receiving nine medals from the Croatians. He also received four bullets in the legs.

Ceku first got to know Americans while fighting in Croatia. The Croatian government had hired a private military contractor called Military Professional Resources, based in Virginia, to upgrade its forces, and Ceku took the course. In 1995, officers trained by the company, including Ceku, helped drive an estimated hundred and fifty thousand Serbian civilians out of Croatia, in what was then the largest single episode of ethnic cleansing in the Yugoslav wars. (Milosevic later set a new record in Kosovo.) The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, in The Hague, eventually indicted three Croatian commanders for crimes against humanity for their actions.

Ceku was not one of those indicted in The Hague, but, in 2002, he was indicted by a Serbian court for war crimes allegedly committed in Croatia. He was accused of responsibility for the deaths of hundreds of Serbian civilians. Later that year, another Serbian court convicted him, in absentia, of genocide against Serbs in Kosovo. Interpol arrest warrants requested by Serbia led to Ceku's being detained briefly at airports in Hungary and Slovenia; U.N. officials intervened to obtain his release on both occasions. When the subject is war crimes, the Serbs suffer from an acute credibility problem, since they are widely considered to have been the aggressors in each of the Balkan wars—they have also convicted Bill Clinton and Tony Blair of war crimes, and sentenced them to twenty years each. The genocide charge against Ceku in Kosovo seems notably weak. According to *Jane's Defence Weekly,* though, Ceku played a leading role in the 1995 Croatian offensive, and in another, in 1993, which also featured extensive, well-documented atrocities against civilians.

I asked Ceku about the war-crimes charges. "My case has been very carefully looked at in The Hague," he said evenly. "Nothing was found. I was a professional soldier. I took my duties very seriously. I did my job in a very professional way. So my conscience is very clean. Really, I know for sure that I have never ordered a crime. I have never committed a crime. I have never seen a crime." (A spokeswoman for the Hague Tribunal, asked about its investigation of Ceku, said, "It would be incorrect to conclude that just because there is no indictment issued against an individual this individual has been determined not to have participated in any criminal activity.")

Ceku has said that he always believed war was the only way that Kosovo's Albanians would ever be free of Serbian domination. For most of the nineties, though, they tried nonviolence. Milosevic had banished virtually all ethnic Albanians from the university in Pristina, from the civil service, and from the professions, and the Albanians built a parallel society—underground systems of health, education, and welfare. In 1991, they declared an independent republic, led by Ibrahim Rugova, a literary critic. It was a collective effort that drew minimal Western attention, and by 1996 the Kosovo Albanians had launched a low-level armed struggle.



The K.L.A.'s strategy was to provoke Milosevic, by means of hit-and-run attacks on his police and soldiers in Kosovo, into a huge overreaction that would draw the West into the conflict. The strategy worked brilliantly. In February, 1998, a high-ranking American diplomat in the Balkans described the K.L.A. as "without any question a terrorist group." But, little more than a year later, after Milosevic's forces had launched another crackdown, the Clinton Administration took up the Kosovar cause, and the K.L.A., as Kosovars liked to say, suddenly had an air force—NATO. The Serbs drove nearly a million Albanians across the borders into Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro.

By then, Ceku had taken command of the K.L.A. He hiked over the mountains from Albania to Kosovo, by way of Macedonia, through deep winter snows. He told me that it was the most difficult physical ordeal of his life. He used obscure, uncleared trails to avoid detection, and repeatedly crossed Serbian lines. His main task, once he took command, was to keep the K.L.A. from being destroyed.

"The Serbian intention was to end the war without any K.L.A. left," he said. "We lost a lot of soldiers." Ceku's troops managed to help NATO, drawing Serbian units from their hideouts into more exposed positions. When the war ended, after seventy-eight days of NATO bombing, the K.L.A. still had some twenty thousand fighters. (Among them were three of Ceku's brothers—Afrim, Arsim, and Besim.) What it didn't have, despite NATO's victory, was a state.

Paddy Ashdown, who spent more than three years as the U.N.'s governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has written that no humanitarian occupation can succeed without a designated "intervention end state"—a detailed, achievable goal. The coalition that drove Milosevic's forces out of Kosovo, Ashdown argued, failed to make it explicit that the purpose of the war was to procure a state for the Kosovars. There was never any realistic alternative—at least, not one that the Kosovars would accept. This should have been obvious in 1999, and should have been spelled out at the war's end.

Kosovar children meet Agim Ceku, the Prime Minister of Kosovo and a former K.L.A. commander, June 1, 2007.

HAZIR REKA/REUTERS

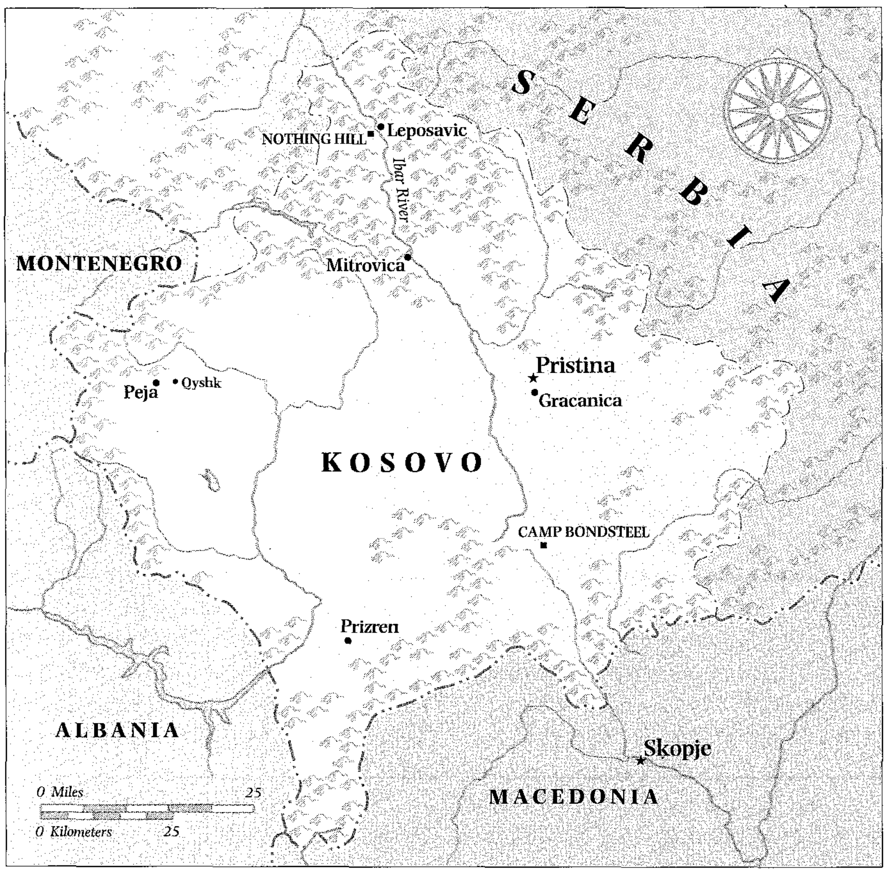
Richard Holbrooke disagrees. Ending the war on any terms that specified independence "would have required immense additional fighting and a ground-troop invasion," he told me. As it was, NATO suffered no casualties. The coalition's great failure came later, Holbrooke said, after Milosevic fell from power, in late 2000. "The Bush Administration had an open glide path to Kosovo independence during its first term," he said. "The Serbs were in a moderate reformist period, the United States was globally dominant, and, most important, the Russians were still flat on their backs." But Administration officials, including Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice, were publicly dismissive of the American commitment in the Balkans. By the time the White House turned its attention to the Kosovo problem, Holbrooke said, the window was closing—hard-liners were back in power in Belgrade, and "you had a resurgent Russia, with an aggressive Putin, enabled by an Iraq-weakened Bush." (Putin has called an independent Kosovo a threat to peace in Europe.)

Iraq is, of course, the new benchmark for a bungled intervention, and the internationals in Kosovo comfort themselves with the idea that, however difficult things get in Pristina, they are not as difficult as they are in Baghdad. But some of the basic "peace-building" mistakes made in Kosovo were not so different from the ones that were later made in Iraq. There was a broad failure to impose law and order early on. In Kosovo, this meant unpunished revenge killings of Serbs and other minorities, which helped drive nearly half of Kosovo's Serbs into Serbia and Montenegro; only a hundred thousand remain, and most live in enclaves protected by U.N. peacekeepers. And it meant that criminal networks—smuggling, brothels, protection rackets—flourished.

Today, the gray economy, as it is called, rivals the measurable one. There is a building boom in Pristina, but it doesn't seem to be reflected in official statistics. Most of the traditional overland criminal-trafficking routes between southwestern Asia and Western Europe pass through the Balkans, and Kosovo sees its share of that vast trade. In Switzerland, Kosovo Albanians are known for their control of the heroin market, and are thought to send the profits back home to be laundered.

Another concern, particularly since September 11th, has been Islamist terrorism. The Balkans, like Afghanistan and Chechnya, have been a battlefield for mujahideen—a stop on a sort of holy warrior's Grand Tour. In the Bosnian war, a foreign Islamist contingent known as El Mujahed joined the Muslim side, and there were rumors that jihadist veterans from Bosnia had joined the K.L.A. Osama bin Laden is believed to have set up a series of charities as front groups in Albania in the mid-nineties, and one of his operatives reportedly approached the K.L.A. in 1998, offering financial aid. The Kosovars turned him down; their strategy was to attract Western backing, and they knew that Al Qaeda was already anathema in the West.

Albanians have always been known for wearing their religion lightly; in Kosovo, bars do a brisk business, and women dress in tight clothes and high heels. There is an Islamic political party in Kosovo, but it has gained only one seat in the parliament—winning even fewer votes than a Christian Democratic party. (In Albania itself, thirty per cent of the population is Catholic or Orthodox Christian.)



Kosovo exists in limbo: legally a province of Serbia, effectively a U.N. protectorate.

JEFFREY WARD

Still, after the war, Saudi Arabia and assorted Gulf State charities contributed generously to the reconstruction of mosques in Kosovo. (Serbian forces damaged or destroyed more than two hundred mosques.) The mosques built by the Saudis can be seen from miles away. Their minarets, built from sheet metal, look like rocket nose cones—ideal for the desert, perhaps, but architecturally disastrous in the Balkans. Islamic charities have given scholarships to young Kosovars, and some of those students have come home from the Middle East transformed, alarming their families with their newfound piety. They are few in number, but easily spotted—the young men wearing beards and djellabahs, the young women in hijab. The Ministry of Education recently suspended three girls from school for wearing head scarves. Rumors abound, Balkan style, about the Saudis' paying young people to wear these foreign costumes. Other rumors have the Serbs paying them, trying to make Kosovo look bad.

A twenty-seven-year-old medical student named Arber Vokrri told me, "I actually kind of admire them. People are so hostile, so suspicious: 'Why do they have to bring these strange ideas here? They're going to alienate our allies!' And this sort of thing really accelerated after 9/11. But they always stay so calm. We're not in danger—they are, from our xenophobia."

Vokrri spent nearly two years in Germany, where he lived in a barracks with refugees from all over the world. "I met a lot of mujahideen, radicals from Chechnya, Hamas guys," he said. "Most of them hate the Saudi government, the Gulf States, any Muslim country that has good relations with the U.S. So it was funny to come home and find that some of my old friends had started going to the mosque and become religious—their discussions were all about how we must be thankful to NATO for liberating us, and how the Christian countries are our friends. I could never see these kids here, even the ones who fought in wars, going for a malignant political culture like Al Qaeda."

After the Serb withdrawal in June, 1999, General Ceku, working closely with NATO, oversaw the K.L.A.'s demobilization, and became the commander of a small successor force, the Kosovo Protection Corps, which was seen as the nucleus of a Kosovo army. Ceku's first deputy was a former K.L.A. field commander named Ramush Haradinaj. Together, they retained direct authority over several thousand fighters.

Ceku and Ramush, as Haradinaj is called, represent distinctly different strains of Albanian nationalism. Ceku is a man who grabbed the opportunities that the Yugoslav system afforded, yet never forgot who he was. Haradinaj is more of a classic *kacak*, a village rebel and social bandit, a type that features heavily in local legend. His family was always in trouble with the authorities, and he left Kosovo as a young man. He worked in Switzerland as a bodyguard, then joined the K.L.A. and, by his own account, ran guns through the mountains from Albania. Wounded in battle at least three times, he built a fierce guerrilla force and a formidable reputation as a warrior. When his brother Luan was killed in an ambush, Haradinaj dragged his body away, under fire, and then carried it on his back over the mountains to Albania for a proper burial. He was thirty when Milosevic's army withdrew from Kosovo.

General Wesley Clark, who commanded NATO's forces during the Kosovo war, invoked the *kacak* type when he talked about Milosevic's suing for peace. "Milosevic was afraid of the tremendous, high-spirited militarism of the Albanians, which was expressed by the K.L.A.," Clark told me. "That's why he surrendered. He was afraid that, with our help, the Albanians would rise up and win." Of Ceku, he said, in contrast, "He could have been in anybody's army and done well."

Haradinaj entered politics and, after parliamentary elections in 2004, became Prime Minister. He surprised many people with his dynamic performance in office. He also built—or had built for him—an ostentatious mansion in central Pristina, in a style that might be described as Balkan Mirror-Finish Molded Plastic. Ceku's home, in a nondescript suburb out toward the airport, is a modest brick house with a rusted satellite dish.

Local journalists told me that Haradinaj's money came from criminal enterprises run by his supporters, but that the internationals loved him because he could deliver security. One journalist recalled that Bernard Kouchner, the co-founder of Doctors Without Borders (and now the French foreign minister), who served from 1999 to 2001 as the U.N. Secretary-General's special representative for Kosovo—effectively, Kosovo's governor—used to say, "We have to work with the guys who can deliver." Another journalist said, "He meant the *gangs* who can deliver."

Three months into his term, however, Haradinaj was indicted in The Hague for war crimes. According to the indictment, K.L.A. forces under the command of Haradinaj and two co-defendants murdered more than thirty civilians during an ethnic-cleansing campaign in 1998; many of the killings were preceded by rape or torture. Haradinaj resigned immediately, and kept his heavily armed followers calm. He is now on trial in the Netherlands.

The U.N. Mission's attitude toward Haradinaj cannot have pleased the prosecutors. On the day the indictment was announced, Soren Jessen-Petersen, who was then the U.N. governor, described Haradinaj as "a close partner and friend." He was sure, he added, that "Mr. Haradinaj will again be able to serve Kosovo, to whose better future he has sacrificed and contributed so much." Senator Joseph Biden, of Delaware, a proponent of Kosovo's independence, found time to praise Haradinaj on the Senate floor, describing him as "a very hard, tough guy" who "looks as if he could lift an ox out of a ditch." Biden went on, "I want to publicly salute him for his personal courage, for the statesmanship he has demonstrated. . . . I wish him well."

The folklore surrounding Ramush Haradinaj has only grown since he left for The Hague. The prevailing view among Kosovo's Albanians is that the K.L.A. was engaged in self-defense against marauding Serbian forces. But many civilians, including ethnic Albanians accused of collaboration, died at the hands of the rebels, and their fates, and the grief of their survivors, find no place in the nationalist narrative in Albanian Kosovo today. Billboards saying simply "With Ramush" are everywhere. Rock concerts are held to raise funds for his defense; one can even contribute by cell phone. The Tribunal's prosecutors complain that witnesses have disappeared, died under suspicious circumstances, or simply failed to turn up.

Haradinaj's departure created a leadership vacuum, and, at his invitation, Ceku stepped into it. He had no political base of his own; his role was that of the warrior and public servant called to duty. But Ceku's disengagement from the usual favor-trading of politics has left him with a weak grasp of the thousand small levers of power that might help make an ill-trained, inexperienced bureaucracy work. His administrative ineffectuality has earned him private, and even some public, scorn.

Ceku, in his first speech as Prime Minister, shocked his countrymen by addressing Kosovo's Serbs in Serbian, inviting them to take part in building a new nation. His stature as a war hero insulates him from rear-guard political attacks on his patriotism, and attempts by ultra-nationalists to smear him because his wife is part Serbian and his children's first language is Croatian have not got far. Not that Ceku's efforts to engage local Serbs have yielded much; nearly every Kosovo Serb leader I asked said that he would not talk to Ceku. As far as the Serbs are concerned, he is an irredeemable war criminal.

One day this summer, my translator and I drove to Qyshk, a scatter of brick farmsteads amid fields thick with corn, pumpkins, and beans. On a dirt road flanked by poplar trees, a man walked past us, hoe on his shoulder, and my translator asked him if the Cekus lived nearby. The man guided us to a narrow lane, then waved us onto it.

We found Afrim and Arsim and their wives on the porch of a two-story house. Although we weren't expected, we were welcomed. Arsim, who is forty-three, had worked in Switzerland and spoke some English. Afrim, forty-five, was quieter. He had powerful arms and heavily calloused hands. The brothers showed me a room at the back of the main house, a modern version of a traditional Albanian *oda*, where village clansmen gathered. An Albanian flag stood in a corner, and a number of hunting rifles were hanging on the walls, along with one well-worn AK-47. "That was Agim's gun in the war," Arsim said.

We were invited to join a small caravan of vehicles, crammed with children, on a drive that took us through Peja, a densely built old city, and into the mountains, to a hut in a high pasture. The hut had no electricity or plumbing, but it had a porch, and we sat there. Afrim pointed to a towering ridgeline across the valley. "The K.L.A. carried all its guns and supplies over passes down that way," he said. "On foot."

After a while, someone asked if I had seen the monument in Qyshk.

I said I had.

"She was there," Afrim said, indicating his wife. He meant at the massacre.

His wife, blond and round-faced, regarded me steadily. Finally, she spoke. "They said they were going to execute me and my children because I was Agim's sister-in-law," she said. She pointed to a tall, skinny boy wearing an Iron Maiden T-shirt. "He was a baby, still in my arms."

"They burned my father's body," Afrim said. "I picked him up with my hands. I buried him."

Stephen Smith and Michael Montgomery, the reporters who, after the war, helped reconstruct the massacre, identified and even interviewed some of the Serb participants, who were by then living in Montenegro. But it is unlikely that any of them will be prosecuted. The Hague Tribunal is no longer bringing new cases. As part of its "completion strategy," evidence in many ongoing investigations is being transferred to local authorities. War-crimes trials do take place in Kosovo, but the defendants tend to be ex-K.L.A. fighters, since Serbs are impossible to extradite, even when they can be located.

This summer, the Tribunal's lead prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, suggested that the question of Kosovo's independence be postponed while she made a last attempt to persuade Belgrade to help her apprehend General Ratko Mladic, the

Bosnian Serb commander and the most prominent remaining fugitive. When the Kosovars reacted with outrage, Del Ponte backed off.

The Kosovars' gratitude for America's intervention has not faded. Displays of affection for the United States are ubiquitous. It is common to see the Stars and Stripes, and there is an oddly bipartisan intersection in Pristina: Bill Clinton Boulevard and Bob Dole Street. The main U.S. military base, Camp Bondsteel, is a thousand-acre behemoth near the Macedonian border—clearly a long-term investment. When I asked Agim Ceku about Americans, he seemed to run out of complimentary adjectives. "They're very practical people," he said. "Focussed. Pragmatic. Principled. When they commit themselves, they deliver. They always deliver."

The United States has not, of course, been able to deliver independence. But Ceku is careful not to blame the Americans. "America cannot do this thing alone," he said. "We know that the European Union is a very slow organization on decision-making and on committing itself. So it takes some time. The problem is Russia."

Having failed for years to focus on Kosovo's status, the U.N. shifted gears sharply after the riots of 2004. High-level government delegations from Pristina and Belgrade went to Vienna, where they worked for fourteen months to reach an agreement. Martti Ahtisaari, a former President of Finland with experience in the Balkans, led a team assigned to come up with a comprehensive proposal for the resolution of Kosovo's status.

The Ahtisaari Package, as it became known, was unveiled earlier this year. It recommended extensive protections for the Kosovo Serb minority, with a high degree of self-government and a special relationship with Belgrade. The Ahtisaari Package's bottom line, though, was its endorsement of "supervised independence" for Kosovo, leading to normal statehood. Every Western government involved in Kosovo embraced the Ahtisaari proposal. But Belgrade and, more important, Moscow turned it down.

Most of the Kosovo Serbs I asked both denounced the Ahtisaari Package and claimed not to have read it. They didn't have to—it recommended independence, and that was all they needed to know. (The Serbian press had its own gloss. One story: "ALBANIAN MAFIA BOUGHT AHTISAARI." His price: forty million euros and two young girls.)

In Gracanica, a Serbian village a few miles south of Pristina, I met a doctor who said that she had not set foot in Pristina in eight years. Her fears about going into town may be justified, and yet there was something fantastical about her insistent description of the K.L.A. as an illegal organization—as though this were an essential point of local history that I might miss. It was a common view, oddly frozen in place since 1999.

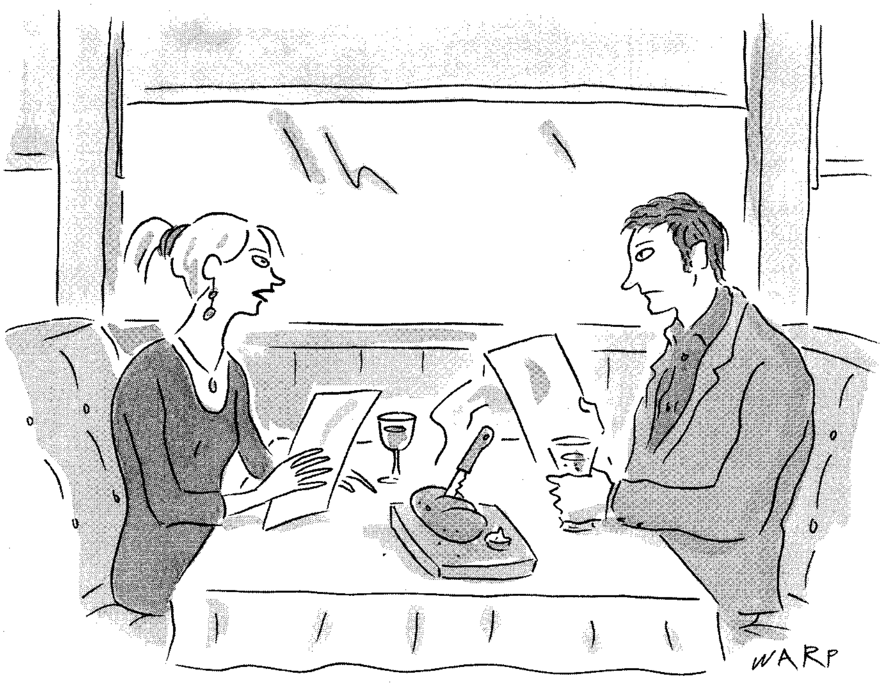
Besides the privileges and the security that Kosovo Serbs lost when Milosevic withdrew his forces, many also lost their jobs. The government bureaucracies and state enterprises that they worked for simply ceased to exist. Most of those who are still employed draw their paychecks from Belgrade—the sign on the clinic of the doctor in Gracanica, for example, announced, in Cyrillic script, its affiliation with the Ministry of Health in Belgrade.

In the 2004 elections for the Kosovo parliament, fewer than one per cent of eligible Serbs voted, even though ten seats and two cabinet ministries are allocated for their representatives. One of the few who ran for office was Oliver Ivanovic. He was elected to parliament, and shortly afterward unknown assailants, presumably Serb hard-liners, blew up his parked car.

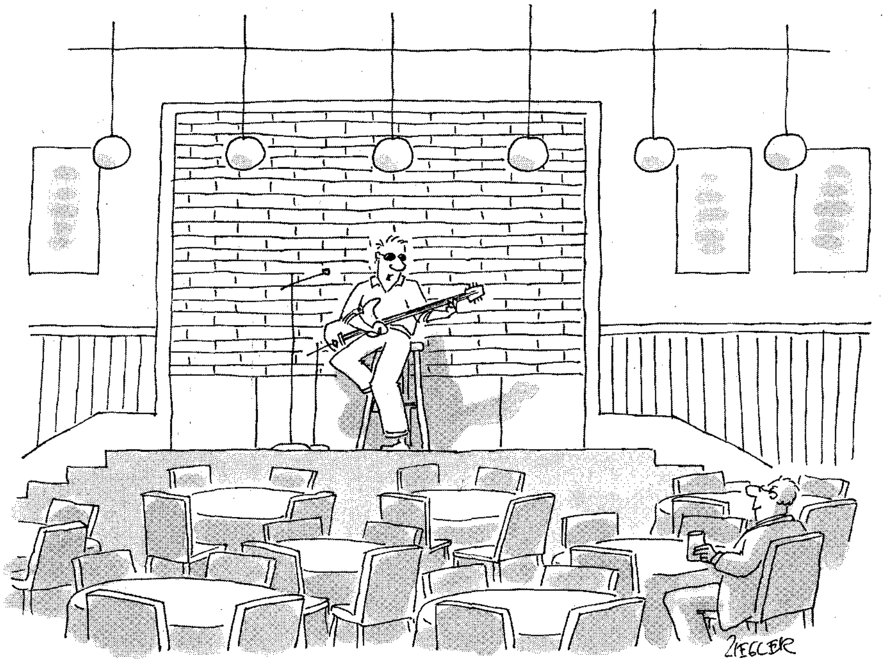
The attack on Ivanovic was surprising, given his credentials. He was the original leader of a notorious group known as "the bridge watchers," in Mitrovica, an old mining city in northern Kosovo. Mitrovica is divided by the Ibar River, and Serbs mostly lived on the north side or fled there after the war, making the main bridge a natural choke point. Ivanovic and his men camped at the bridge for years, heavily armed, confronting peacekeepers and Albanians who tried to cross. Ivanovic had no great military experience (he managed a mining company), but, as he told me, "you don't study this kind of resistance at West Point."

Ivanovic is, however, unusual in that he acknowledges that, like the Serbs, the Albanians have suffered. There was a night in February, 2000, when a Serbian mob in north Mitrovica, enraged by a rocket attack on a bus and a grenade attack on a local café, drove a thousand Albanians from their homes, killing seven or eight. "It was horrible—like Kristallnacht," he said. "People just didn't want Albanians anywhere near them anymore."

We were sitting in a café in north Mitrovica. Ivanovic studied me politely.



"If I go for the bread, stab my hand."



"Oh, fabulous. I see that my cult is here again tonight."

• •

"When Albanians and Serbs meet, they all have their own stories," he said. "A listener just has to pick. And normally he picks the Albanian story."

I asked why he stayed in Kosovo.

"It's very hard to explain to an American," he said. "I am someone who can get a job somewhere else."

Indeed, young, middle-class Kosovo Serbs have tended to emigrate, leaving behind the elderly, the infirm, peasants, and the ill-educated. Some stay because they have heard that they can expect to be treated shabbily in Serbia—housed in refugee camps, derided as "Kosovo Gypsies." Another common explanation is that they cannot bear to abandon the graves of their parents.

North Mitrovica and its hinterland, which extends forty miles north to Serbia, have become the largest, most important Serb enclave in Kosovo—a "gangster statelet," as it's often called. Here the Serbian secret police operate freely, and the economy revolves almost entirely around smuggling. In Leposavic, a town with a reputation for hardliners, however, I met a man named Miscu, who only wanted to talk pro tennis—he was excited about a recent wave of young Serbian players. Miscu had lived in Virginia, and said that he was going to open a pizza parlor called Las Vegas. He asked if Finnegan was a Jewish name. When I said it was Irish, he suggested that we spend the afternoon drinking beer.

Belgrade has been working, successfully, to make the north ungovernable for Pristina, but as yet neither side is willing to discuss a territorial compromise—one that would leave northern Kosovo in Serbia, for instance. Among Kosovars, talk of giving up land is regarded as treachery; among Serbs, retaining Kosovo is the single most important political issue. Most Serbs have never been there, and have no desire to go, so the connection is rather abstract—Kosovo has a mythic status as the cradle of Serbian Orthodox history. The ruling party in Belgrade is stridently nationalistic, but it likes to encourage foreigners to believe that, if it were to give an inch on Kosovo, the opposition, which is even more belligerent, would very likely win the next election.

It's not that people don't discuss the possibility of partition; it's just that they do so in terrifying scenarios. If Kosovo declares independence, the north will revolt. If the north revolts, the ethnic Albanians in southwest Serbia will revolt. If Ramush is acquitted, the north will revolt. If the north revolts, the Serb Republic of Bosnia will attempt to annex itself to Serbia. And so on.

For some years, the internationals seemed to have given up on the north. More recently, however, peacekeeping troops have tried to reassert themselves, reopening a base near Leposavic. The base is called, for some reason, Nothing Hill. (My Serbian translator found the name "a little insulting.") There was an American detachment rotating through—a National Guard unit from Massachusetts—and the commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Williams, gave me a briefing, using PowerPoint.

The Americans were not welcome when they arrived, Williams said, "but we've earned people's trust." Troops patrolled constantly. "We go out low profile," he said. "Park our Humvees at the edge of town. Walk through town with weapons slung back. Eat and get coffee at local cafés." The unit had twelve interpreters, most of them Bosnian Serbs who were now U.S. citizens.

I asked whether his troops ever crossed the border into Serbia proper. "Never," he said. "But calling it the border is a no-no. It's 'the administrative boundary line.' "

Williams showed me a PowerPoint slide titled "Competitors": the Serbian secret police; the "Siminovic Slobodan Gang," apparently smugglers; the Serbian Army. I was curious about the Army, but when I asked about it Williams hesitated, and said, "What's your clearance?"

Bishop Artemije of Ras-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija has his seat in Gracanica. The church in Gracanica is a five-domed fourteenth-century masterpiece in the middle of a large, leafy, stone-walled compound. Bored-looking Swedish troops were guarding the compound the morning I met the Bishop.

Tiny and ancient, with a long white beard and a sweet smile, Bishop Artemije wore black robes, a stiff round black cap, and, around his neck, a big shiny medallion showing the Madonna and Child. His hands looked like a child's, pale and soft. He is a venerated figure, his words closely heeded by the Serbian public. We talked in an airy, ornate room, under coats of arms and Orthodox icons.

"There was no 'war' in Kosovo," the Bishop told me. "There was a *terrorism* in Kosovo. And Milosevic was in power then, and he was not servile toward the internationals." Rewarding Albanian terrorists with independence now would be wrong. "*No pasarán!*" the Bishop said, his eyes twinkling.

The Serbs have long tried to define their fight with the K.L.A. as a religious conflict, and this was the theme that the Bishop took up. "Islam has no borders," he said. "Terrorism has no borders. The presence of Wahhabism is growing in Bosnia and Kosovo. We think the Americans want to use Bosnia and Kosovo to overcome the tensions they have with the Islamic countries. America leads the fight against world terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East, and for that it is condemned by Islamic countries. They say it is not really fighting terrorism but Islam. That's why America needs something to show that it is not really against Muslims: 'Look, we are helping the Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo get their democratic rights, their own state.' " (There may be something to this. Senator Biden recently wrote, "The people of Kosovo—already the most pro-American in the Islamic world—will provide a much needed example of a successful U.S.-Muslim partnership.")

Bishop Artemije believes that an independent Kosovo "would be the base for Islamic jihad, which would threaten security not only in the Balkans but in the whole of Europe and in America. Do we need to remember September 11th?"

Interfaith dialogue with Muslims was pointless, Artemije said. He had tried it already, before the riots of 2004. "All our conversations and conclusions were simply an empty letter," he said. "Since the 2004 pogrom, we don't have any contact. We don't speak. There is no use." Had the Bishop read the Ahtisaari proposal? "Partially," he said dismissively. (I asked Ceku if he ever spoke with Bishop Artemije. "I've tried to talk," he said. "I sent a letter that I want to meet him. But he never answers.") The Bishop's voice was soft, though his words were bitter. "The international community tolerates whatever Albanians do against Christians in Kosovo," he said. "Thousands of murderers are walking freely through the streets of Kosovo today."

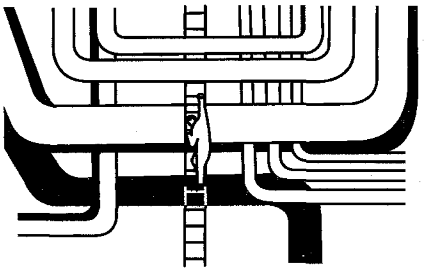
The most common graffito by far in Kosovo is a red-and-black stencil: "*Jo Negociata—Vetevendosje!*" ("No Negotiations—Self-Determination!") The Vetevendosje Movement, as it's called, attracts mainly young, educated, urban Kosovars who are fed up with the internationals, the politicians, and the stalled drive to independence.

In February, a rowdy Vetevendosje demonstration outside the U.N. offices in Pristina caused a Romanian unit to panic and start shooting rubber bullets into the crowd. Two people were killed and more than eighty injured. The U.N.'s police chief was fired, but the Romanians were not punished. Vetevendosje's leader was arrested, and is now on trial.

Some five hundred people showed up for Vetevendosje's most recent demonstration, this summer. Marching alongside the college students were older men, clearly peasants from the villages, wearing the traditional white conical cap called a *plis*. They chanted "K.L.A.! K.L.A.!"

An enormous Albanian flag—blood-red, with a black double-headed eagle—was unfurled across the front of a building, and the marchers roared. The flag has become an unusually potent symbol lately, ever since the U.N. Mission declared that it will not be the flag of an independent Kosovo. This decision has infuriated Kosovo Albanians. What's more, the U.N. Mission is sponsoring a public competition to come up with a neutral design for a new flag: no black, no red, and no eagles will be allowed—too divisive.

The march wound through downtown Pristina, drums booming. On the steps of the National Theatre, five dummies in business suits with pumpkins for heads were set on chairs—effigies of Kosovo's negotiators in its talks with Belgrade. A curly-haired young woman with a microphone went down the line, pulling off each pumpkin top. Inside the head of a former K.L.A. commander she found "dreams of factories, luxury." Inside that of an older politician she found "dreams of Tito." Inside Agim Ceku's head she found "Ramush!" The crowd laughed and jeered.



The march ended at the U.N. Mission's headquarters, where a large white gift box labelled "Ahtisaari," with a message in English—"Take This Package and Go to Hell"—was dumped over the front gates.

The demonstration ended peacefully, but in Kosovo the threat of violence never quite leaves the air. The 2004 riots arose on the back of peaceful protests. The K.L.A. veterans' association announces regularly that it may no longer be able to control its members' disappointment at not having achieved independence. And Kosovo is justly famed for its gun culture. In a population of slightly more than two million, there are believed to be nearly half a million guns in civilian hands.

In September, the deadlock over Kosovo's future intensified. The government in Belgrade declared that Western recognition of a unilateral declaration of independence would cancel the agreement that ended the 1999 war. Serbia would impose a trade embargo, and would have the right to send its armed forces back into Kosovo.

Prime Minister Ceku seemed to shrug off this threat, calling independence a "done deal." He and his negotiating team are once again engaged in talks, at the insistence of their Western partners, but no one expects an agreement. The talks are scheduled to end December 10th. In Kosovo, the general expectation, encouraged by Ceku, is that the next step will be a unilateral declaration of independence, most likely before the end of the year.

The United States is still sending mixed signals—pro-independence but anti-unilateralist. Yet Ceku may be feeling less constrained than he once did. The U.N. Mission in Kosovo has scheduled local and parliamentary elections for mid-November, and Ceku has announced that he will not run. His only concern now, he said, is to make Kosovo "as ready as possible for independence." Meanwhile, Ramush Haradinaj, his charismatic double, from the dock in The Hague, has quietly added his name to his party's list of parliamentary candidates. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

William Finnegan talks about Kosovo.

FICTION

SIN DOLOR

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE

He came into the world like all the rest of them—like us, that is—as brown as an iguana and flecked with the detritus of afterbirth, no more remarkable than the date stamped on the morning newspaper, but when I cleared his throat and slapped his infant buttocks he didn’t make a sound. Quite the contrary. His eyes snapped open with that searching myopia of the newborn and he began to breathe, calmly and quietly, with none of the squalling or fuss of the others. My nurse, Elvira Fuentes, who had spent fifteen years working on the cancer ward at the hospital in Guadalajara before coming home to devote herself to me, both as a lover and a helpmate, frowned as I handed the infant to his mother. She was thinking exactly the same thing I was: there must have been some constriction or deformation of the child’s vocal apparatus. Or perhaps he’d been born without it. We’d seen stranger things, all manner of defects and mutations, especially among the offspring of the migrant workers, what with the devil’s brew of herbicides, pesticides, and genetically engineered foodstuffs to which they’ve been routinely exposed. There was one man I won’t name here who came back from the cotton fields of Arizona looking like one of Elvira’s oncological ghosts, and whose wife gave birth nine months later to a monster without a face—no eyes, ears, mouth, or nose, just a web of translucent skin stretched tightly over a head the size of an avocado. Officially, we labelled it a stillbirth. The corpse—if you could call it that—was disposed of with the rest of the medical waste.

But that’s neither here nor there. What I mean to say is that we were wrong. Happily—at least, as it appeared. The child—he was born to Francisco and Mercedes Funes, street venders whose *tacos de chivo* are absolutely poisonous to the digestive tract, and I advise all who read this to avoid their stall, at the corner of Independencia and Constitución, if you value your equilibrium—was soon groping at his mother’s breast and making the usual gurgling and sucking noises. Mercedes Funes, twenty-seven years old at the time, with six children already to her credit, a pair of bowlegs, the shoulders of a fullback, and one continuous eyebrow that made you think of Frida Kahlo (stripped of artistry and elegance, that is), was back at her stall that evening, searing goat over a charcoal grill for the entertainment of the unwary, and, as far as Elvira and I were concerned, that was that. One more soul had entered the world. I don’t remember what we did that night, but I suppose it was nothing special. Usually, after we closed the clinic, we would sit in the courtyard, exhausted, and watch the doves settle on the wires while the serving girl put together a green salad and a *caldereta de verduras* or a platter of fried artichoke hearts, Elvira’s favorite.

Four years slipped by before I next saw the child or gave more than a glancing thought to the Funes clan except when I was treating cases of vomiting and diarrhea, and as a matter of course questioning my patients as to what and where they’d eaten. “It was the oysters, doctor,” they’d tell me, looking penitent. “Onions, definitely the onions—they’ve never agreed with me.” “Mayonnaise, I’ll never eat mayonnaise again.” And my favorite: “The meat hardly smelled at all.” They’d blame the Chinese restaurant, the Mennonites and their dairy, their own wives and uncles and dogs, but more often than not I was able to trace the source of the problem to the Funes stall. My patients would look at me with astonishment. “But that can’t be, doctor—the Funeses make the best tacos in town.”

At any rate, Mercedes Funes appeared at the clinic one sun-wracked morning with her son in tow. She came through the door tugging him awkwardly by the wrist (they’d named the boy Dámaso, after her husband’s twin brother, who sent small packets of chocolate and the occasional twenty-dollar bill from Los Angeles when the mood took him) and settled into a chair in the waiting room while Elvira’s parrot gnawed at the wicker bars of its cage and the little air-conditioner I kept in the front window churned out its hyperborean drafts. I was feeling especially good that morning, at the top of my game, certain real-estate investments having turned out rather well for me, and Elvira keeping her eye on a modest little cottage at the seashore, which we hoped to purchase as a getaway and perhaps, in the future, as a place of retirement. After all, I was no longer as young as I once was and the Hippocratic frisson of healing the lame and curing the incurable had been replaced by a sort of repetitious drudgery—nothing a surprise anymore and every patient who walked through the door diagnosed before they’d even pulled up a chair. I’d seen it all. I was bored. Impatient. Fed up. But, as I say, on this particular day my mood was buoyant, my whole being filled with an inchoate joy over the prospect of that little frame cottage at the seashore. I believe I may even have been whistling as I entered the examining room.

“And what seems to be the problem?” I asked.

Mercedes Funes was wrapped in a shawl despite the heat. She’d done up her hair and was wearing the shoes she reserved for Sunday Mass. In her lap was the child, gazing up at me out of his father’s eyes, eyes that were perfectly round, as if they’d been created on an assembly line, and which never seemed to blink. “It’s his hands, doctor,” Mercedes said in a whisper. “He’s burned them.”

Before I could say “Let’s have a look” in my paternal and reassuring tone, the boy held out his hands, palms up, and I saw the wounds there. The burns were third degree, right in the center of each palm, and involved several fingers as well. Leathery scabs—eschars—had replaced the destroyed tissue and were seeping a deep wine-colored fluid around the margins. I’d seen such burns before, of course, on innumerable occasions, the result of a house fire, smoking in bed, a child blundering against a stove, but these seemed odd, as if they’d been deliberately inflicted. I glanced up sharply at the mother and asked what had happened.

“I was busy with a customer,” she said, dropping her eyes as if to summon the image, “a big order, a family of seven, and I wasn’t watching him—and Francisco wasn’t there. He’s out selling bicycle tires now, you know, just so we can make ends meet. Dámaso must have reached into the brazier when my back was turned. He took out two hot coals, doctor, one in each hand. I only discovered what he’d done when I smelled the flesh burning.” She gave me a glance from beneath the continuous eyebrow that made her look as if she were perpetually scowling. “It smelled just like goat. Only different.”

“But how—?” I exclaimed, unable to finish the question. I didn’t credit her for a minute. No one, not even the fakirs of India (and they are fakers), could hold onto a burning coal long enough to suffer third-degree burns.

“He’s not normal, doctor. He doesn’t

GARETH SAMBIDGE/GETTY IMAGES

feel pain the way others do. Look here"—and she lifted the child's right leg as if it weren't even attached to him, rolling up his miniature trousers to show me a dark raised scar the size of an adult's spread hand—"do you see this? This is where that filthy pit bull Isabel Briceño keeps came through the fence and bit him, and we've gone to the lawyer over it, too, believe me, but he never cried out or said a word. The dog had him down in the dirt, chewing on him like he was a bone, and if my husband hadn't gone out into the yard to throw his shaving water on the rosebushes I think he would have been torn to pieces."

She looked out the window a moment, as if to collect herself. The boy stared at me out of his unblinking eyes. Very slowly, as if he were in some perverse way proud of what had befallen him or of how stoically he'd endured it, he began to smile, and I couldn't help thinking that he'd make a first-rate soldier in whatever war we were prosecuting when he grew up.

"And do you see this?" she went on, tracing her index finger over the boy's lips. "These scars here?" I saw a tracery of pale jagged lines radiating out from his mouth. "This is where he's bitten himself—bitten himself without knowing it."

"Señora Funes," I said in my most caustic tone, the tone I reserve for inebriates with swollen livers and smokers who cough up blood while lighting yet another cigarette, right there in my office, no less, "I don't think you're telling me the whole truth here. This boy has been abused. I've never seen a more egregious case. You should be ashamed of yourself. Worse: you should be reported to the authorities."

She rolled her eyes. The boy sat like a mannequin in her lap, as if he were made of wood. "You don't understand: he doesn't feel pain. Nothing. Go ahead. Prick him with your needle—you can push it right through his arm and he wouldn't know the difference."

Angry now—what sort of dupe did she take me for?—I went straight to the cabinet, removed a disposable syringe, prepared an injection (a half dose of the B_{12} I keep on hand for the elderly and the anemic), and dabbed a spot on his stick of an arm with alcohol. They both watched indifferently as the needle slid in. The boy never flinched. Never gave any indication that anything was happening at all. But that didn't prove a thing. One child out of a hundred would steel himself when I presented the needle (though the ninety-nine others would shriek as if their fingernails were being pulled out, one by one).

"Do you see?" she said.

"I see nothing," I replied. "He didn't flinch, that's all. Many children—some, anyway—are real little soldiers about their injections." I hovered over him, looking into his face. "You're a real little solider, aren't you, Dámaso?" I said.

From the mother, in a weary voice: "We call him Sin Dolor, doctor. That's his nickname. That's what his father calls him when he misbehaves, because no amount of spanking or pinching or twisting his arm will even begin to touch him. Sin Dolor, doctor. The Painless One."

The next time I saw him he must have been seven or eight, I don't really recall exactly, but he'd grown into a reedy, solemn boy with great devouring eyes and his father's Indian hair, still as thin as a puppet and still looking anemic. This time the father brought him in, carrying the boy in his arms. My first thought was worms, and I made a mental note to dose him before he left, but then it occurred to me that it must only have been his mother's cooking and I dismissed the idea. A stool sample would do. But of course we'd need to draw blood to assess hemoglobin levels—if the parents were willing, that is. Both of them were notoriously tightfisted, and I rarely saw any of the Funes clan in my offices unless something was seriously amiss.

"What seems to be the problem?" I asked, rising to take Francisco Funes's hand in my own.

With a grunt, he bent down to set the boy on his feet. "Go ahead, Dámaso," he said, "walk for the doctor."

I noticed that the boy stood unevenly, favoring his right leg. He glanced first at his father, then at me, dipped his shoulder in resignation and walked to the door and back, limping as if he'd dislocated his knee. He looked up with a smile. "I think something's wrong with my leg," he said in a voice as reduced and apologetic as a confessor's.

I cupped him beneath his arms and swung him up onto the examining table, giving the father a look—if this wasn't child abuse, then what was?—and asked, "Did you have an accident?"

His father answered for him. "He's broken his leg, can't you see that? Jumping from the roof of the shed when he should know better." Francisco Funes was a big man, powerfully built, with a low but penetrating voice, and he levelled a look of wrath on his son, as if to say that the truth of the matter was evident and the boy would have a whipping when he got home, broken leg or no.

I ignored him. "Can you stretch out here for me on your back?" I said to the boy, patting the examining table. The boy complied, lifting both his legs to the table without apparent effort, and the first thing I noticed were the scars there, a constellation of burns and slashes uncountable, running from his ankles to his thighs, and I felt the outrage come up in me all over again. Abuse! The indictment flared in my head. I was about to call for Elvira to come in and evict the father from my offices so that I could treat the son—and quiz him, too—when I ran my hand over the boy's left shin and discovered the swelling there. He did indeed have a broken leg—a fractured tibia, from the feel of it. "Does this hurt?" I asked, putting pressure on the spot.

The boy shook his head.

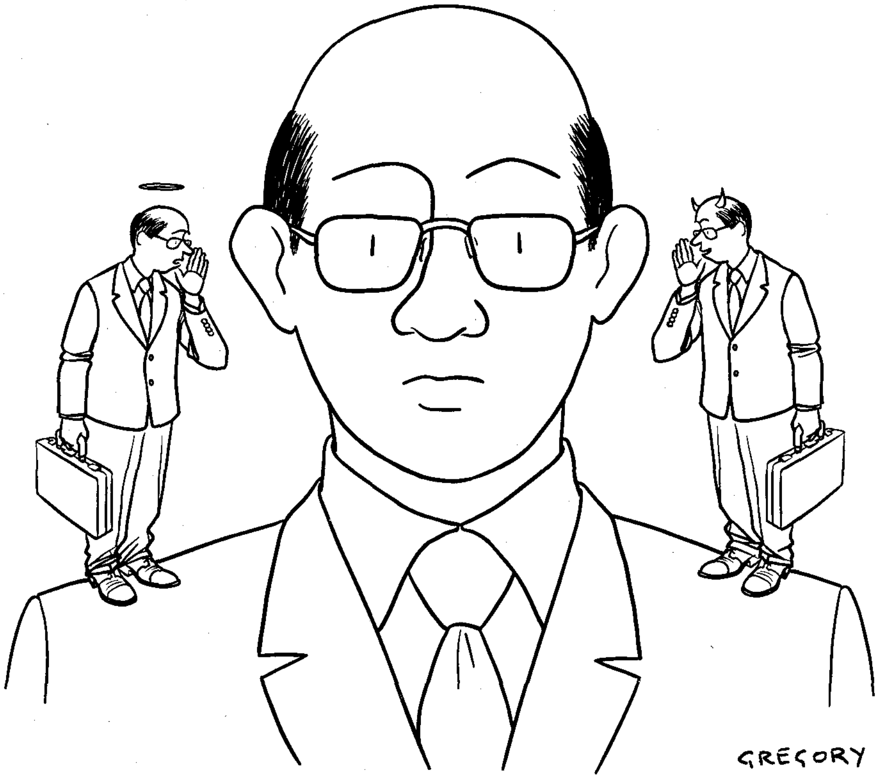
"Nothing hurts him," the father put in. He was hovering over me, looking impatient, expecting to be cheated, and wanting only to extract the pesos from his wallet, as if his son's injury were a sort of tax, and then get on with the rest of his life.

"We'll need X-rays," I said.

"No X-rays," he growled. "I knew I should have taken him to the *curandero*, I knew it. Just set the damn bone and get it over with."

I felt the boy's gaze on me. He was absolutely calm, his eyes like the motionless pools of the rill that brought the water down out of the mountains and into the cistern behind our new cottage at the seashore. For the first time, it occurred to me that something extraordinary was going on here, a kind of medical miracle: the boy had fractured his tibia and should have been writhing on the table and crying out with the pain of it, but he looked as if there were nothing at all the matter, as if he'd come into the friendly avuncular doctor's office just to have a look around at the skeleton on its stand and the framed diplomas on the whitewashed walls and to bask in the metallic glow of the equipment Elvira polished every morning before the patients started lining up outside the door.

It hit me like a thunderclap: he'd walked on a broken leg. Walked on it and didn't know the difference but for the fact that he was somehow mysteriously limping. I couldn't help myself. I gripped his leg to feel the alignment of the bone at the site of the fracture. "Does this hurt?" I asked. I felt the bone slip into place. The light outside the window faded and then came up again as an unseen cloud passed overhead. "This?" I asked. "This?"



"Run it by legal." *"Run it by accounting."*

After that day, after I'd set and splinted the bone, put the boy in a cast, and lent him a couple of old mismatched crutches before going out to the anteroom and telling Francisco Funes to forget the bill—"Free of charge," I said—I felt my life expand. I realized that I was staring a miracle in the face, and who could blame me for wanting to change the course of my life, to make my mark as one of the giants of the profession, to be studied and revered through the ages instead of fading away into the terminal ennui of a small-town practice, of the doves on the wire, the *caldereta* in the pot, and the cottage at the seaside? The fact was that Dámaso Funes must have harbored a mutation in his genes, a positive mutation, superior, progressive, nothing at all like the ones that had given us the faceless infant and all the other horrors that paraded through the door of the clinic day in and day out. If that mutation could be isolated—if the genetic sequence could be discovered—then the boon for our poor suffering species would be immeasurable. Imagine a pain-free old age. Painless childbirth, surgery, dentistry. Imagine Elvira's patients in the oncology ward, racing around in their wheelchairs, grinning and joking to the last. What freedom! What joy! What an insuperable victory over the afflictions that twist and maim us and haunt us to the grave!

I began to frequent the Funes stall in the hour before siesta, hoping to catch a glimpse of the boy, to befriend him, take him into my confidence, perhaps even have him move into the house and take the place of the child Elvira and I had never had because of the grinding sadness of the world. I tried to be casual. "*Buenas tardes*," I would say in my heartiest voice as Mercedes Funes raised her careworn face from the grill. "How are you? And how are those mouthwatering tacos? Yes, yes, I'll take two. Make it three." I even counterfeited eating them, though it was only a nibble and only of the tortilla itself, while whole legions of my patients past and present lined up for their foil-wrapped offerings. Two months must have gone by in this way before I caught sight of Dámaso. I ordered, stepped aside, and there he was, standing isolated behind the grill, even as his younger siblings—there were three new additions to the clan—scrabbled over their toys in the dirt.

His eyes brightened when he saw me, and I suppose I said something obvious, like "I see that leg has healed up well. Still no pain, eh?"

He was polite, well bred. He came out from behind the stall and took my hand in a formal way. "I'm fine," he said, and paused. "But for this." He lifted his dirty T-shirt (imprinted with the logo of some North American pop band, three sneering faces and a corona of ragged hair) and showed me an open wound the size of a fried egg. Another burn.

"Ooh," I exclaimed, wincing. "Would you like to come to the office and I'll treat that for you?" He just looked at me. The moment hovered. The smoke rose from the grill. "Gratis?"

He shrugged. It didn't matter to him one way or the other—he must have felt himself immortal, as all children do until they become sufficiently acquainted with death and all the miseries that precede and attend it, but of course he was subject to infection, loss of digits, limbs, the sloughing of the flesh, and corruption of the internal organs, just like anyone else. Though he couldn't feel any of it. He shrugged again. Looked to his mother, who was shifting chunks of goat around the cheap screen over the brazier as the customers called out their orders. "I need to help my mother," he said. I was losing him.

It was then that I hit on a stratagem, the sort of thing that comes on a synaptical flutter like the beating of internal wings: "Do you want to see my scorpions?"

I watched his face change, the image

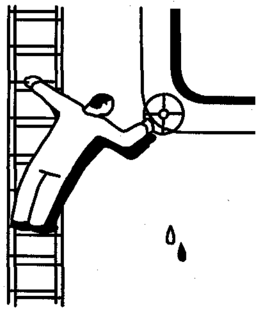
of a foreshortened arachnid with its claws and pendent stinger rising miasmic before him. He gave a quick glance to where his mother was making change for Señora Padilla, an enormous woman of well over three hundred pounds whom I'd treated for hypertension, adult-onset diabetes, and a virulent genital rash that no standard medication seemed able to eradicate, and then he ducked behind the brazier, only to emerge a moment later just up the street from where I was standing. He signalled impatiently with his right hand, and I gave up the ruse of lunching on his mother's wares, turned my back on the stall, and fell into step with him.

"I keep one in a jar," he said, and it took me a moment to realize he was talking of scorpions. "A brown one."

"Probably *Vaejovis spinigerus*, very common in these parts. Does it show dark stripes on its tail?"

He nodded in a vague way, which led me to believe that he hadn't looked all that closely. It was a scorpion—that was enough for him. "How many do you have?" he asked, striding along without the slightest suggestion of a limp.

I should say, incidentally, that I'm an amateur entomologist—or, more specifically, arachnologist—and that scorpions are my specialty. I collect them the way a lepidopterist collects butterflies, though my specimens are very much alive. In those days, I kept them in terraria in the back room of the clinic, where they clung contentedly to the undersides of rocks and pottery shards I'd arranged there for their benefit.



"Oh, I don't know," I said. We were just then passing a group of urchins goggling at us from an alleyway, and they all, as one, called out his name—and not in mockery or in play but reverentially, in homage. He was, I was soon to discover, a kind of hero among them.

"Ten?" he guessed. He was wearing sandals. His feet shone in the glare of the sunlight, kicking out ahead of him on the paving stones. It was very hot.

"Oh, a hundred or more, I'd say. Of some twenty-six species." And then, slyly: "If you have the time, I'll show you them all."

Of course, I insisted on first treating the burn, as a kind of quid pro quo. It wouldn't do to have him dying of a bacterial infection, or of anything else for that matter—for humanitarian reasons, certainly, but also with respect to the treasure that he was carrying for all mankind. His excitement was palpable as I led him into the moist, dim back room, with its concrete floor and its smell of turned earth and vinegar. The first specimen I showed him—*Hadrurus arizonensis pallidus*, the giant desert scorpion, some five inches long and nearly indistinguishable in color from the sand it rested on—was clutching a cricket in its pedipalps as I lifted the screen at the top of the terrarium. "This is the largest scorpion in North America," I told him, "though its venom is rather weak compared with what *Centruroides exilicauda* delivers. The bark scorpion, that is. They live around here, too, and they can be very dangerous."

All he said was "I want to see the poison one."

I had several specimens in a terrarium set against the back wall, and I turned off the lights, pulled down the shades, and used a black light to show him how they glowed with their own natural phosphorescence. As soon as I'd flicked on the black light and he'd had a moment to distinguish the creatures' forms as they crawled around their home, he let out a whoop of delight and insisted on shining the light into each of the terraria in succession until he finally led me back to the *Centruroides*. "Would they sting me?" he asked. "If I reached in, I mean?"

I shrugged. "They might. But they're shy creatures and like most animals they want to avoid any sort of confrontation—and they don't want to waste their venom. You know, it takes a great deal of caloric resources to make the toxin—they need it for their prey. So that they can eat."

He turned his face to me in the dark, the glow of the black light erasing his features and lending a strange blue cast to his eyes. "Would I die?" he asked.

I didn't like where this was leading—and I'm sure you've already guessed what was to come, the boy who feels no pain and the creatures that come so well equipped to inflict it—so I played up the danger. "If one were to sting you, you might become ill, might vomit, might even froth at the mouth. You know what that is, frothing?"

He shook his head.

"Well, no matter. The fact is, a sting of this species might kill someone very susceptible, an infant maybe, an old person, but probably not a boy of your age, though it would make you very, very sick—"

"Would it kill my grandfather?"

I pictured the grandfather. I'd seen him dozing behind the stall on occasion, an aggregation of bones and skin lesions who must have been in his nineties. "Yes," I said, "it's possible—if he was unlucky enough to step on one on his way to the bathroom one night . . ."

It was then that the bell sounded in the clinic, though we were closed, except for emergencies, during the afternoon. I called for Elvira, but she must have been taking her lunch in the garden or dozing in the apartment upstairs. "Come with me," I said to the boy and I led him out of the back room, through the examining room, and into the office, where I found one of the men of the neighborhood, Dagoberto Domínguez, standing at the counter, his left hand wrapped in a bloody rag and a small slick gobbet of meat, which proved to be the tip of his left index finger, clutched in the other. I forgot all about Dámaso.

When I'd finished bandaging Señor Domínguez's wound and sent him off in a taxi to the hospital with the tip of his finger packed in ice, I noticed that the door to the back room stood open. There, in the dark, with the black light glowing in its lunar way, stood little Dámaso, his shirt fluorescing with the forms of my scorpions—half a dozen at least—as they climbed across his back and up and down the avenues of his arms. I didn't say a word. Didn't move. Just watched as he casually raised a hand to his neck where my *Hadrurus*—the giant—had just emerged from the collar of his shirt, and I watched as it stung him repeatedly, while he held it between two fingers and then tenderly eased it back into its cage.

Was I irresponsible? Had I somehow, in the back of my mind, hoped for just such an outcome—as a kind of perverse experiment? Perhaps so. Perhaps there was that part of me that couldn't help collapsing the boundary between detachment and sadism, but then did the term even apply? How could one

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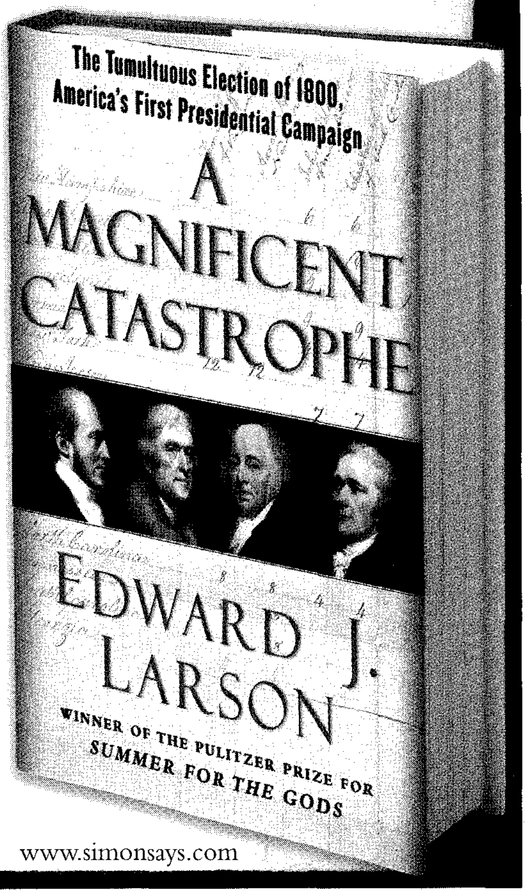
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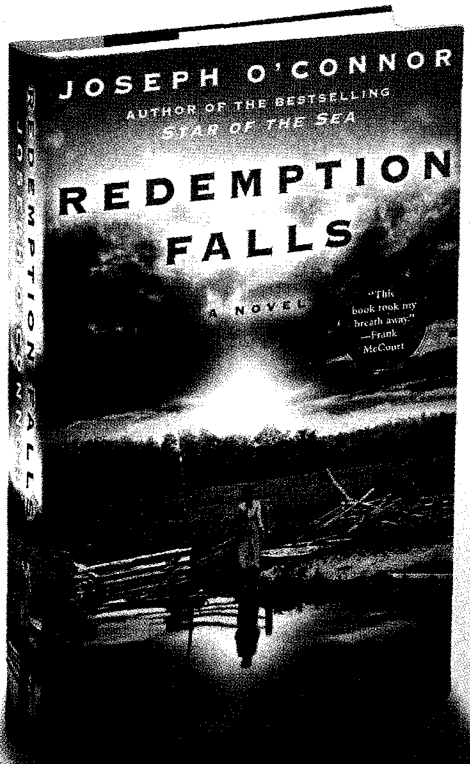
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be sadistic if the victim felt nothing? At any rate, from that day on, even as I wrote up my observations and sent them off to Boise State University, where Jerry Lemongello, one of the world's premier geneticists and an old friend from my days at medical school in Guadalajara, had his state-of-the-art research lab, Dámaso became my constant companion. He seemed to revel in the attention that Elvira and I gave him, coming as he did from a large and poor family, and in time he began to dine with us frequently, and even, on occasion, to spend the night on a cot in the guest bedroom. I taught him everything I knew about scorpions and their tarantula cousins, too, and began to instruct him in the natural sciences in general and medicine in particular, a subject for which he seemed to have a special affinity. In return, he did odd jobs about the place, sweeping and mopping the floors of the clinic, seeing that the scorpions had sufficient crickets to dine on and the parrot its seed and water and bits of fruit.

In the meantime, Jerry Lemongello pressed for a DNA sample and I took some scrapings from inside the boy's mouth (which had been burned many times over—while he could distinguish hot and cold, he had no way of registering what was *too* hot or *too* cold) and continued my own dilatory experiments, simple things like reflex tests, pinpricks to various parts of the anatomy, even tickling (to which he proved susceptible). One afternoon—and I regret this still—I casually remarked to him that the paper wasps that had chosen to build a massive nest just under the eaves of the clinic had become a real nuisance. They were strafing my patients as they ducked through the screen door and had twice stung poor Señora Padilla in a very tender spot when she came in for her medication. I sighed and wished aloud that someone would do something about it.

When I glanced out the window fifteen minutes later, there he was, perched on a ladder, shredding the nest with his bare hands while the wasps swarmed him in a roiling black cloud. I should have interfered. Should have stopped him. But I didn't. I simply watched as he methodically crushed the combs full of pupae underfoot and slapped the adults dead as they futilely stung him. I treated the stings, of course—each of them an angry, swollen red welt—and cautioned him against ever doing anything so foolish again, lecturing him on the nervous system and the efficacy of pain as a warning signal that something is amiss in the body. I told him of the lepers whose fingers and toes abrade away to nothing because of the loss of feeling in the extremities, but he didn't seem to understand what I was driving at. "You mean pain is good?" he asked.

"Well, no," I said. "Pain is bad, of course, and what we do in my profession is try to combat it so that people can go on with their lives and be productive and so on."

"My mother has pain," he said, running a finger over the bumps on his forearm as if they were nothing more than a novelty. "In her back. From bending over the grill all day, she says."

"Yes," I said—she suffered from a herniated disk—"I know."

He was quiet a moment. "Will she die?"

I told him that everyone would die. But not today and not from back pain.

A slow smile bloomed on his lips. "Then may I stay for dinner?"

It was shortly after this that the father came in again and this time he came alone, and whether his visit had anything to do with the wasp adventure or not, I can't say. But he was adamant in his demands, almost rude. "I don't know what you think you're doing with my boy, but I want him back."

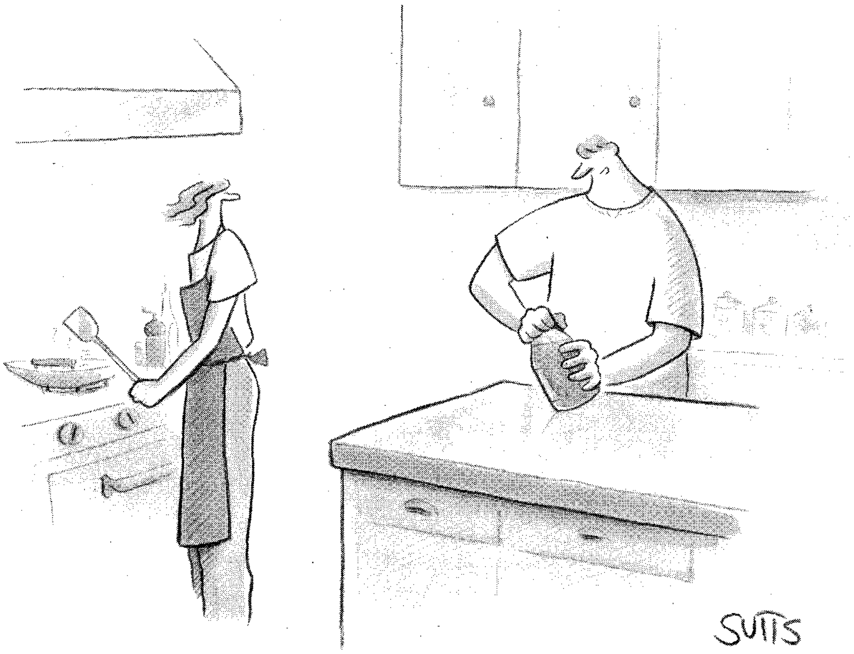
I was sitting at my desk. It was eleven in the morning, and beyond the window the hummingbirds were suspended over the roseate flowers of the trumpet vine, as if sculpted out of air. Clouds bunched on the horizon. The sun was like butter. Elvira was across the room, at her own desk, typing into the new computer while the radio played so softly I could distinguish it only as a current in the background. The man refused to take a seat.

"Your son has a great gift," I said after a moment. And though I'm an agnostic with regard to the question of God and a supernatural Jesus, I employed a religious image to reinforce the statement, thinking that it might move a man like Francisco Funes, imbued as he was with the impoverished piety of his class: "He could redeem mankind—redeem us from all the pain of the ages. I only want to help."

"Bullshit," he snarled, and Elvira looked up from her typing, dipping her head to see over her glasses, which slipped down the incline of her nose.

"It's the truth," I said.

"Bullshit," he repeated, and I reflected on how unoriginal he was, how limited and ignorant and borne down under the weight of the superstition and the greed



"Honey, look how much better I am at this than you are."

that afflict all the suffering hordes like him. "He's my son," he said, his voice touching bottom, "not yours. And if I ever catch him here again I'll give him such a whipping—" He caught himself even as I flashed my bitterest smile. "You don't know, but I have my ways. And if I can't beat him I can beat you, doctor, with all respect. And you'll feel it like any other man."

"Are you threatening me? Elvira"—I turned to her—"take note."

"You bet your ass I am," he said.

And then, quite simply, the boy disappeared. He didn't come into the clinic the following morning or the morning after that. I asked Elvira about it, and she shrugged as if to say, "It's just as well." But it wasn't. I found that I missed having him around, and not simply for selfish reasons (Jerry Lemongello had written to say that the DNA sample was unusable and to implore me to take another) but because I'd developed a genuine affection for him. I enjoyed explaining things to him, lifting him up out of the stew of misinformation and illiteracy into which he'd been born, and, if I saw him as following in my footsteps as a naturalist or even a physician, I didn't think I was deluding myself. He was bright, quick-witted, with a ready apprehension of the things around him and an ability to observe closely, so that, for instance, when I placed a crab, a scorpion, and a spider on a tray before him he was able instantly to discern the relationship between them and apply the correct family, genus, and species names I'd taught him. And all this at nine years of age.

On the third morning, when there was still no sign of him, I went to the Funes stall in the marketplace, hoping to find him there. It was early yet, and Mercedes Funes was just laying the kindling on the brazier while half a dozen slabs of freshly (or, at least, recently) slaughtered goat hung from a rack behind her (coated, I might add, with flies). I called out a greeting and had begun, in a circuitous way, to ask about her health, the weather, and the quality of her goat, when at some point she winced with pain and put her hand to her back, slowly straightening up to shoot me what I can only call a hostile look. "He's gone off to live with his grandmother," she said. "In Guadalajara."

And that was that. No matter how hard I pressed, Mercedes Funes would say no more, nor would her donkey of a husband, and when they had the odd medical emergency they went all the way to the other side of the village, to the clinic of my rival, Dr. Octavio Díaz, whom I detest heartily, though that's another story. Suffice it to say that some years went by before I saw Dámaso again, though I heard the rumors—we all did—that his father was forcing him to travel from town to town like a freak in a sideshow, shamelessly exploiting his gift for the benefit of every gaping rube with a few pesos in his pocket. It was a pity. It was criminal. But there was nothing that I or Jerry Lemongello or all the regents of Boise State University could do about it. He was gone and we remained.

Another generation of doves came to sit on the wires, Elvira put on weight around the middle and in the hollow beneath her chin, and as I shaved each morning I watched the inevitable progress of the white hairs as they crept up along the slope of my jowls and into my sideburns and finally colonized the crown of my head. I got up from bed, ran the water in the sink, and saw a stranger staring back at me in the mirror, an old man with a blunted look in his reconstituted eyes. I diagnosed measles and mumps and gonorrhea, kneaded the flesh of the infirm, plied otoscope, syringe, and tongue depressor, as if the whole business were some rarefied form of punishment in a Sophoclean drama. And then one afternoon, coming back from the pet shop with a plastic sack of crickets for my brood, I turned a corner and there he was.

A crowd of perhaps forty or fifty people had gathered on the sidewalk outside the Gómez bakery, shifting from foot to foot in the aspiring heat. They seemed entranced—none of them so much as glanced at me as I worked my way to the front, wondering what it was all about. When I spotted Francisco Funes, the blood rushed to my face. He was standing to one side of a makeshift stage—half a dozen stacked wooden pallets—gazing out on the crowd with a calculating look, as if he were already counting up his gains, and on the stage itself, Dámaso, shirtless, shoeless, dressed only in a pair of clinging shorts that did little to hide any part of his anatomy, was heating the blade of a pearl-handled knife over a charcoal brazier until it glowed red. He was stuck all over like a kind of hedgehog with perhaps twenty of

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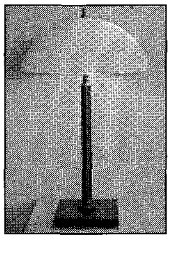

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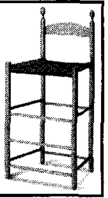

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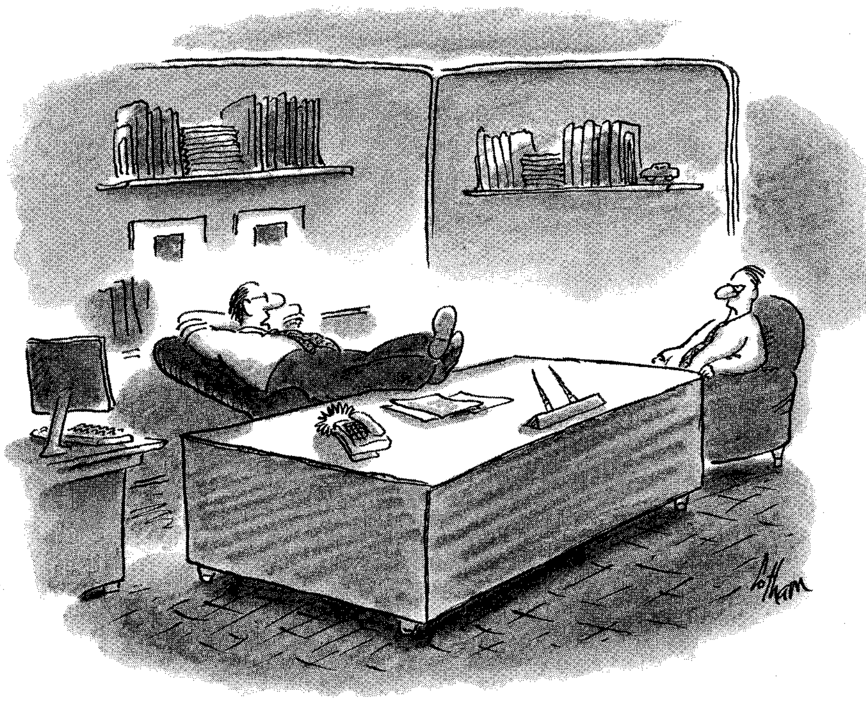


"Sometimes, when business is brisk, I have to settle for no nap at all."

those stainless steel skewers people use for making shish kebab, including one that projected through both his cheeks, and I watched in morbid fascination as he lifted the knife from the brazier and laid the blade flat against the back of his hand so that you could hear the sizzling of the flesh. A gasp went up from the crowd. A woman beside me fainted into the arms of her husband. I did nothing. I only watched as Dámaso, his body a patchwork of scars, found a pinch of skin over his breastbone and thrust the knife through it.

I wanted to cry out the shame of it, but I held myself in check. At the climactic moment I turned and faded away into the crowd, waiting for my chance. The boy—he was an adolescent now, thirteen or fourteen, I calculated—performed other feats of senseless torture that I won't name here, and then the hat went around, the pesos were collected, and father and son headed off in the direction of their house. I followed at a discreet distance, the crickets rasping against the sides of the bag. I watched the father enter the house—it was grander now, with several new rooms already framed and awaiting the roofer's tarpaper and tiles—as the boy went to a yellow plastic cooler propped up against the front steps, extracted a bottle of Coca-Cola, and lowered himself into the battered armchair on the porch as if he were a hundred and fifty years old.

I waited a moment, until he'd finished his poor reward and set the bottle down between his feet, and then I strolled casually past the house as if I just happened to be in the neighborhood. When I drew even with him—when I was sure he'd seen me—I stopped in my tracks and gave him an elaborate look of surprise, a double take, as it were. "Dámaso?" I exclaimed. "Can it really be you?"

I saw something light up in his eyes, but only the eyes—he seemed incapable of forming a smile with his lips. In the next moment he was out of the chair and striding across the yard to me, holding out his hand in greeting. "Doctor," he said, and I saw the discoloration of the lips, the twin pinpoints of dried blood on either cheek amid a battlefield of annealed scars, and I couldn't have felt more shock and pity if he were indeed my own son.

"It's been a long time," I said.

"Yes," he agreed.

My mind was racing. All I could think of was how to get him out of there before Francisco Funes stepped through the door. "Would you like to come over to the clinic with me—for dinner? For old times' sake? Elvira's making an eggplant lasagna tonight, with a nice crisp salad and fried artichokes, and look"—I held up the bag of crickets and gave it a shake—"we can feed the scorpions. Did you know that I've got one nearly twice as big as *Hadrurus*—an African variety? Oh, it's a beauty, a real beauty—"

And there it was, the glance over the shoulder, the very same gesture he'd produced that day at the stall when he was just a child, and in the next moment we were off, side by side, and the house was behind us. He seemed to walk more deliberately than he had in the past, as if the years had weighed on him in some unfathomable way (or fathomable, absolutely fathomable, right down to the corrosive depths of his father's heart), and I slowed my pace to accommodate him, worrying over the thought that he'd done some irreparable damage to muscle, ligament, cartilage, even to the nervous system itself. We passed the slaughterhouse where his mother's first cousin, Refugio, sacrificed goats for the good of the family business, continued through the desiccated, lizard-haunted remains of what the city fathers had once intended as a park, and on up the long sloping hill that separates our village by class, income, and, not least, education.

The holy aroma of Elvira's lasagna bathed the entire block as we turned the corner to the clinic. We'd been talking of non-consequential things, my practice, the parrot—yes, she was well, thank you—the gossip of the village, the weather, but nothing of his life, his travels, his feelings. It wasn't until I'd got him into the back room under the black light, with a glass of sweetened iced tea in his hand and a plate of *dulces* in his lap, that he began to open up to me. "Dámaso," I said at one point, the scorpions glowing like apparitions in the vestibules of their cages, "you don't seem to be in very high spirits—tell me, what's the matter? Is it . . . your travels?"

In the dark, with the vinegary odor of the arachnids in our nostrils and the promise of Elvira's cuisine wafting in the wings, he carefully set down his glass and brushed the crumbs from his lap, before looking up at me. "Yes," he said softly. And then, with more emphasis, "Yes."

I was silent a moment. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my *Hadrurus* probing the boundaries of its cage. I waited for him to go on.

"I have no friends, doctor, not a single one. Even my brothers and sisters look at me like I'm a stranger. And the boys all over the district, in the smallest towns, they try to imitate me." His voice was strained, the tones of the adult, of his father, at war with the cracked breathy piping of a child. "They do what I do. And it hurts them."

"You don't have to do this anymore, Dámaso." I felt the heat of my own emotions. "It's wrong, deeply wrong. Can't you see that?"

He shrugged. "I have no choice. I owe it to my family. To my mother."

"No," I said. "You owe them nothing. Not your own self, your own body, your heart—"

"She brought me into the world."

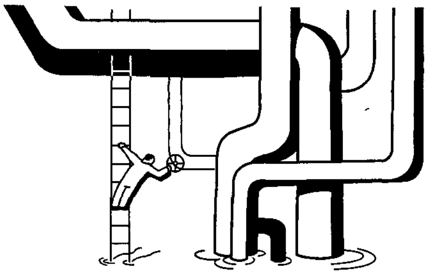
Absurdly, I said, "So did I."

There was a silence. After a moment, I went on, "You've been given a great gift, Dámaso, and I can help you with it—you can live here with us, with Elvira and me, and never have to go out on the street and . . . and *damage* yourself again, because what your father is doing is evil, Dámaso, *evil*, and there's no other word for it."

He raised a wounded hand and let it fall again. "My family comes first," he said. "They'll always come first. I know my duty. But what they'll never understand, what you don't understand, is that I do hurt, I do feel it, I *do*." And he lifted that same hand and tapped his breastbone, right over the place where his heart constricted and dilated and shot the blood through his veins. "Here," he said. "Here's where I hurt."

He was dead a week later.

I didn't even hear of it until he was already in the ground and Jerry Lemongello was buckled in for the long flight down from Boise with the hope of collecting a DNA sample himself, too late now, Mercedes Funes inhaling smoke and tears and pinning one hopeless hand to her lower back as she bent over the grill while her husband wandered the streets in a dirty guayabera, as drunk as any derelict. They say that the boy was showing off for the urchins who followed him around as if he were some sort of divinity, the kind of boys who thrive on pain, who live to inflict and extract it as if it could be measured and held, as if it were precious, the kind of boys who carve hieroglyphs into their skin with razor blades and call it fashion. It was a three-story building. "Jump!" they shouted. "Sin Dolor! Sin Dolor!" He jumped, and he didn't feel a thing.



But what I wonder—and God, if He exists, have mercy on Francisco Funes and the mother, too—is if he really knew what he was doing, if it was a matter not so much of bravado but of grief. We will never know. And we will never see another like him, though Jerry Lemongello tells me he's heard of a boy in Pakistan with the same mutation, another boy who stands in town squares and mutilates himself to hear the gasps and the applause and to gather money at his feet.

Within a year, Dámaso was forgotten. His family's house had burned to ashes around the remains of a kerosene heater, the goats died and the brazier flared without him, and I had closed up the clinic and moved permanently, with Elvira and her parrot, to our cottage by the sea. I pass my days now in the sunshine, tending our modest garden, walking the sugar-white beach to see what the tide has brought in. I no longer practice medicine, but of course I'm known here as El Estimado Doctor, and on occasion, in an emergency, a patient will show up on my doorstep. Just the other day, a little girl of three or four came in, swaddled in her mother's arms. She'd been playing in the tide pools down by the lava cliffs that rise up out of the sand like dense distant loaves and had stepped on a sea urchin. One of the long black spikes that the animal uses for defense had broken off under the child's weight and embedded itself in the sole of her foot.

I soothed her as best I could, speaking softly to distract her, speaking nonsense, really—all that matters in such circumstances is the intonation. I murmured. The sea murmured along the shore. As delicately as I could, I held her miniature heel in my hand, took hold of the slick black fragment with the grip of my forceps, and pulled it cleanly from the flesh, and, I have to tell you, that little girl shrieked until the very glass in the windows rattled, shrieked as if there were no other pain in the world. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

THE JOKER

Richard Prince at the Guggenheim.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The immense art-world success of Richard Prince, the subject of a large and seductive retrospective at the Guggenheim, depresses me, not that I can gainsay it. If "quintessential artist in a generation" were a job opening, Prince, fifty-eight years old, would be an inevitable hire, having hit no end of avant-gardist sweet spots since the late nineteen-seventies in photography, painting, and sculpture. His contemporaries Cindy Sherman and, off and on, Jeff Koons are better, for stand-alone works of originality, beauty, and significance. But they don't contest Prince's chosen, Warholian ground as a magus of contemporary American culture. (Koons tried, but his attempt was too weird for comprehension, let alone assent.) Prince's works make him an artist as anthropologist, illuminating folkways by recycling advertising photographs, cartoon and one-liner jokes, soft-core pornography, motorcycle-cult ephemera, pulp-novel covers, "Dukes of Hazzard"-era car parts, celebrity memorabilia, and other demotic flotsam. His bald rip-offs of painting styles from Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Ruscha, and, lately, Willem de Kooning make him an artist as irreverent art critic, razzing exalted reputations. Prince can seem to cover, in an insouciantly corrosive way, the whole topography of the aesthetic in present high and low life; and he is acute enough that a refusal to play along, for the nuanced pleasures that he provides, would be bigoted. But his is a shallow, brittle, ultimately desolating conceit—seizing on things that are a-twitch with a little vitality, and chloroforming them. Prince's nearest approach to identifiable emotion is the exiguous zeal of obsessive collecting. (He's a bibliophile, with letches for authors, including Nabokov and Kerouac.)

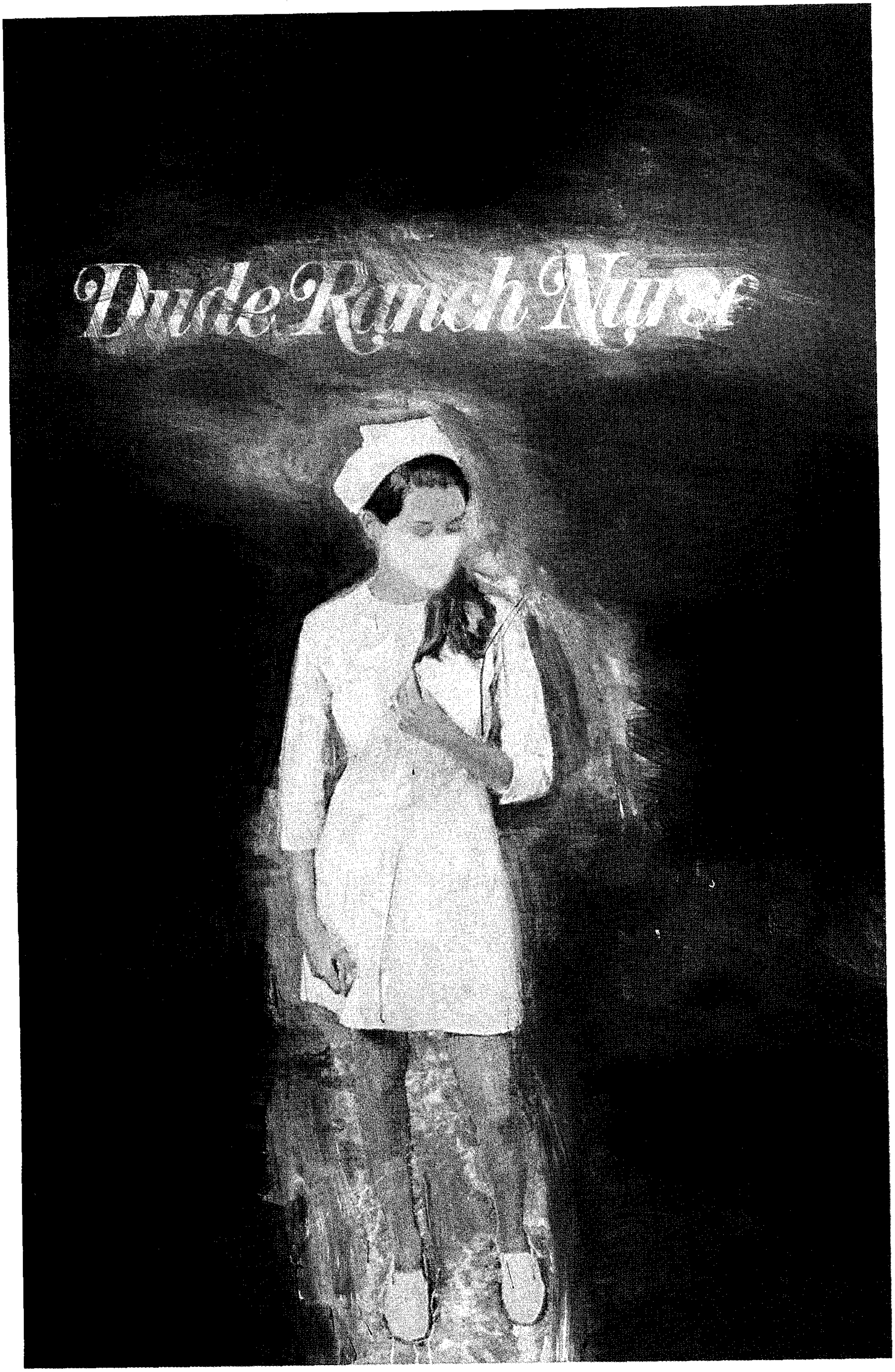
Prince was born in the Panama Canal Zone in 1949, and grew up in a suburb of Boston. He has said that his parents were spies for the Office of Strategic Services, and that his father served in Vietnam. Caution is in order, however, regarding Prince's autobiographical accounts. In 1985, an art magazine, *ZG*, published an interview with him, conducted in 1967 by J. G. Ballard, the English writer of dire fantasy, when Prince was eighteen years old and under detention in London for want of a valid passport. The interview, in which Prince describes his father as a diabolical manipulator of minds, was a lively hoax. Also in the eighties, Prince collaborated with the late Colin de Land, an eccentric dealer, to make the work and shepherd the career of one John Dogg, a fashionable and, it later turned out, nonexistent sculptor. Prince's devotion to the put-on is among his bona fides in a generation—that of punk, deconstruction, and David Letterman—addicted to vertiginous irony: in-jokes with nothing in them. An appropriate bonus of the catalogue is a series of interviews about Prince, by the hipster's hipster Glenn O'Brien, with leading technicians of waggery: ad and magazine people, cartoon editors (including Robert Mankoff, of *The New Yorker*), a car designer, the Hells Angel Sonny Barger, John Waters, and Phyllis Diller.

Prince attended college in Maine and arrived in New York in 1973, where for ten years he worked various low-end jobs (notably, assembling magazine tear sheets) in the Time & Life Building. He started to show in 1975—small, gnomic paintings, prints, and photo-and-text works. His emergence on the scene is commonly, and lazily, associated with "Pictures," an epochal 1977 show at the non-profit downtown gallery Artists Space. He happened not to be in it. (Neither was Cindy Sherman, the first artist who comes to mind in the same connection.) Curated by the critical theorist Douglas Crimp, "Pictures" announced a movement of menacingly cold-eyed appropriation, as in the work of Sherrie Levine, who became known for her no-comment photographs of classic modern photographs. Prince had taken to photographing magazine ads, enjoying the strangeness of, in his words, a "reality that has the chances of looking real, but a reality that doesn't have any chances of being real." He refused an invitation to appear in "Pictures," he has said, because he was put off by what he deemed to be Crimp's dogmatism. (Crimp has denied inviting Prince.) An admirably bristly independence is apparent in his move, eleven years ago, from Manhattan to rural Rensselaerville, New York. There he filled a tacky house with some of his works and collections of this and that to such striking effect that, in 2005, the Guggenheim bought it as an in-situ work of art, titled "Second House." (In June of this year, lightning set it afire; what to do with the intact but charred remnant is undecided.) Flirting with self-forgetful realism in the nineties, Prince took elegiac photographs of woebegone back-road sights, such as a basketball hoop in an overgrown meadow. That mood passed.

Prince has dubbed his retrospective "Spiritual America," keying it to his 1983 photograph of an infamous Garry Gross photograph, published by Playboy Books, in 1976, of a naked Brooke Shields, aged ten, her prepubescent body

COURTESY © RICHARD PRINCE

Prince's "Dude Ranch Nurse" (2002), from a series of paintings from covers of semi-smutty romance novels.


Dude Ranch Nurse

oiled and her face given womanly makeup. Prince applied the title—which comes from Alfred Stieglitz, who coined it for his 1923 photograph of a gelded workhorse's rear end—to the work, to a show consisting of nothing else, and to the one-off gallery, in a Lower East Side storefront, that first hosted it. His unbounded enthusiasm for the awful image offers queasy-making testimony to his character as an artist. He sees in the photograph, he has said, "a body with two different sexes, maybe more, and a head that looks like it's got a different birthday." And he enjoyed the spectacle of Shields's failed later effort, in a lawsuit, to quash Gross's picture, which her mother had authorized for four hundred and fifty dollars. It gave him a "patriotic" feeling, he has declared—"that is to say if I was to have heard that this type of activity over a photograph was happening in another country I would have considered moving there." (Note the piled-up subjunctives: Princean grammar.) The Guggenheim's chief curator, Nancy Spector—who, working closely with the artist, has installed the show with excellent rhythm and clarity—hastens, in an essay in the catalogue, to defend the work as social criticism, "a portrait of desperation" exposing the American pursuit of fame at any cost. But she thereby fails to credit (if that's the word) Prince's omnivorous connoisseurship of kink, as in paintings (which have been selling for millions at auction) from covers of semi-smutty romance novels featuring nurses. He doesn't diagnose decadence. He swims in it.

Certain of Prince's works, early on, nailed tropes of the "Pictures" sensibility for good and all. His gorgeous prints of the cowboy photographs in Marlboro ads, a stock-in-trade since 1980, stick us with the fact that those pictures are beautiful. Any opinions we may have about advertising, cigarettes, and the West founder in our visual bliss. And I remember laughing with amazed delight when I first saw some of the "Gangs," from the mid-eighties—big sheets of rephotographed, gridded photos, such as amateur shots from motorcycle magazines for which guys posed their girlfriends, lasciviously, with their choppers; or of big waves from surfer publications, which emit formulaic, subcultural rapture. If I liked one of those pictures, it occurred to me, I would be fated to like them all, insatiably; and for a moment, still, at the Guggenheim I can feel locked into their wavelengths of avidity. Prince's sensitivity to mores of what John Waters calls the "upper-lower class" yields oracular coups. Prince has been onto something, certainly, with his corralling of antique Borscht Belt gags and an oral tradition of mildly off-color jokes, as texts drawn or stencilled onto his paintings, usually with no thematic relation to the visual elements. For example, "I got good looking kids. Thank God my wife cheated on me." Do market considerations govern Prince's choice of relatively tame jokes, in genres where the best tend to be the dirtiest? (I miss certain gamy favorites of mine.)

Prince's most ambitious works cheerfully vulgarize familiar features of Abstract Expressionism, minimalism, and Pop art. Most successful, and very snappy, are his sculptural, para-minimalist adaptations of hoods and body parts from the Dodge Challenger and other preposterously overpowered coupes from pre-oil-crisis days. The forms, lovely in themselves, receive applications of paint and putty that evoke the never completed customizing projects of youthful owners. Dicier are his pastiches of styles that, unlike minimalism, are poetic in essence. The wandering, lost-sheep brushstrokes in Jasper Johns's classic early paintings excite because their gestural tension and sensitive touch create a surfeit of expressiveness. When Prince imitates them across expanses of collaged bank checks—a recent series of large canvases, with stencilled jokes—the effect is toneless and slack, though decorative. It makes me wonder if he even knows what he's dealing with. His recent, raucous takeoffs on de Kooning's "Women," incorporating ink-jet images from female and male pornography, bespeak a tin eye. By presenting distorted figures, Prince seems to have de Kooning mixed up with Francis Bacon. (De Kooning's pictures are lyrical improvisations of line and paint, in which glimpses of figuration come and go.) An adept of juvenile sarcasm, like Prince, is well advised not to invite comparisons with grownups. ♦

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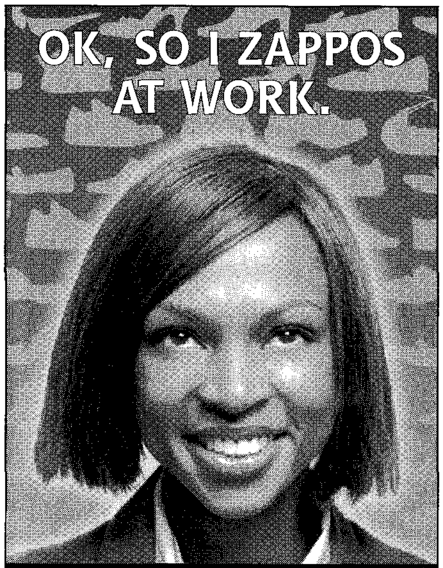
More art by Richard Prince.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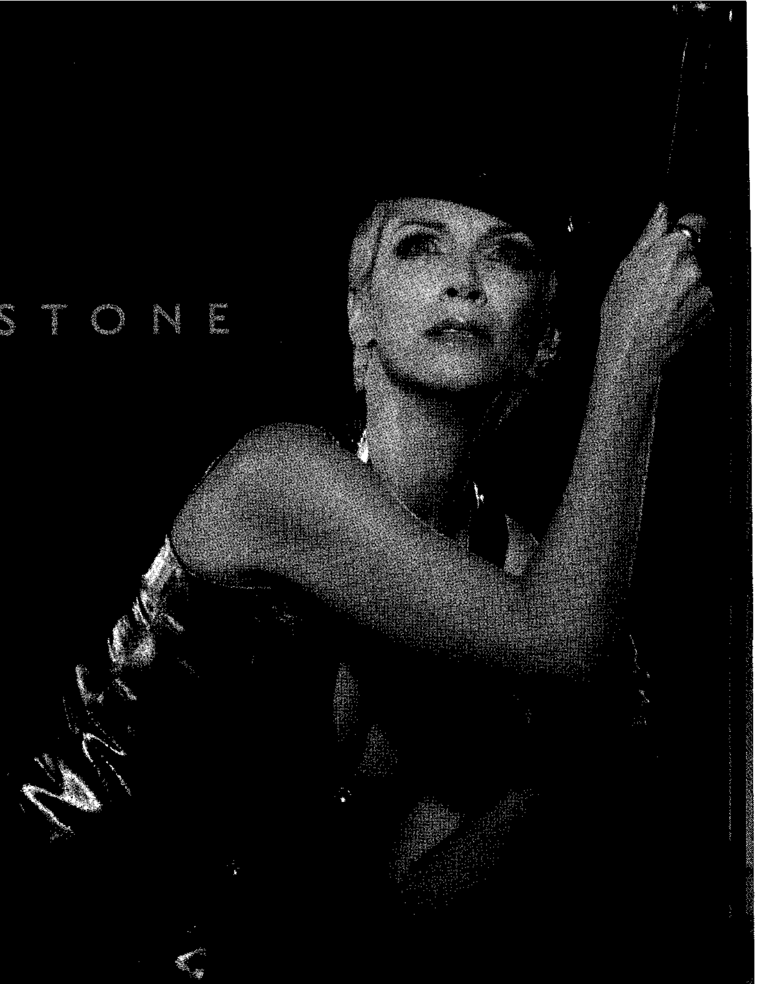

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PARADE'S END

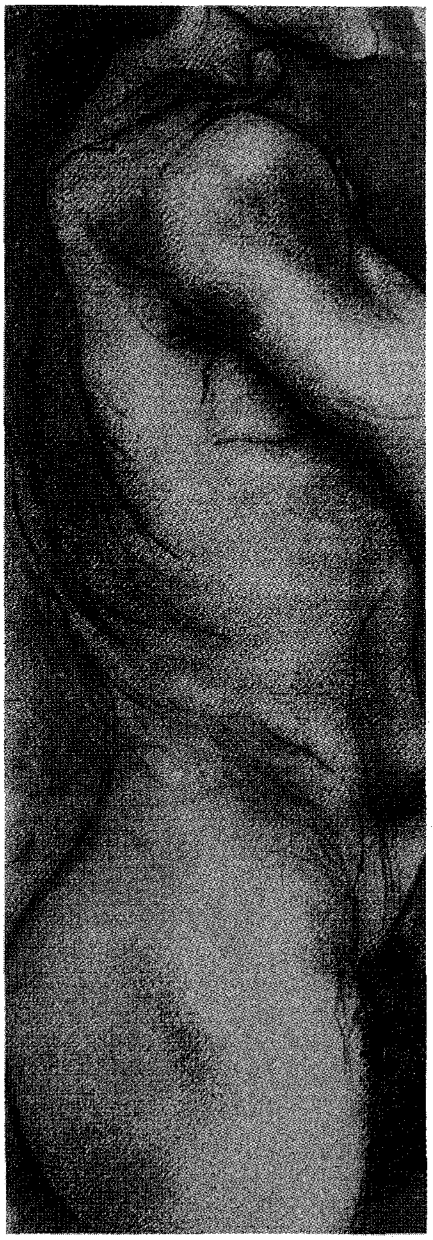
The many lives of Nathan Zuckerman.

BY JAMES WOOD

Before his death, Jonathan Swift pointed to a blighted tree and said to a friend, "I shall be like that tree; I shall die first at the top." Philip Roth's dying animals, at loose in the twilit carnival of his late work, reverse Swift's prophecy: they fear they will die from the bottom up. Their minds are ripe with sexual energy, with transgressive vitality, but their bodies are sour with decline. The aging David Kepesh, in "The Dying Animal," makes the mistake of growing infatuated with one of his many young conquests, and becomes the toy of her youthful sexual mastery. The elderly nameless protagonist of "Everyman," Roth's previous novel, weakened by heart surgery, watches young women jogging along a New Jersey boardwalk, aware of the absurd disparity between his waxing mind and his waning body. He starts a foolishly flirtatious conversation with one of them, who then changes her route and never returns, "thereby thwarting his longing for the last great outburst of everything."

Nathan Zuckerman, the narrator of Roth's new novel, "Exit Ghost" (Houghton Mifflin; $26), is incontinent and, above all, impotent, twin results of prostate cancer. He is seventy-one, the same age at which the hero of "Everyman" dies, and the two novels may be taken as a single report on the undistinguished thing—the bafflement of the body as it is slowly ambushed in broad daylight by what it always knew but would never admit was coming. Partly to shut out the evidence of this decay, Zuckerman has been in rural seclusion in the Berkshires for the past eleven years, without the company of television or the Internet. He has had no relations with women. He simply writes and writes.

"Late Roth" sounds a little like "late monopoly capitalism"—neither shows much evidence of frailty—yet one can now see that a phase of work opened with his great, wild novel "Sabbath's Theater" (1995), in which the struggle between the vitality of sex and the fatality of the body was newly acute. For Mickey Sabbath, there is a constant veering between what he calls "the fantasy of endlessness" and "the fact of finitude." Roth's work since then has returned again and again to these two gates of being, one ever open and one ever closing. Ranged against the fact of death, against the body's decline, the "fantasy of endlessness" means the ceaseless, self-renewing male urge to have sex; it also means the Rothian need to offend and offend and offend "the laudable ideologies"; and it means the ordinary human desire, as one ages, to bring back the dead—one's parents, siblings, spouses, lovers—and keep them endlessly alive, and thus to live outside time. In Roth's terms, sex can do all this at once: it restores unruly and unbiddable life, symbolically immortalizing the self by winding back the clock of finitude. And the novelist, of all people, is supremely endowed with the magical power to bring the dead to life on the page, which is one reason that this work has been so consumed with questions of artifice and fictionality.



© R.B. KITAJ, "SIDES" (1979)/COURTESY MARLBOROUGH GALLERY

The fantasy of endlessness has found its form in late Roth—in a spare, pragmatic prose, apparently unconcerned with literary effects, focussed only on its subject. It is striking, by contrast, how proper and "literary" the earlier work now seems, with its tidy sentences and plush images sewn into the right places, its formal approach to verisimilitude. At the end of "The Anatomy Lesson" (1984), for example, Nathan Zuckerman is in the hospital with a fractured jaw. He sees a patient with cancer of the mouth, and anatomizes the visage with Flaubertian precision and coolness: "There was a hole in her cheek the size of a quarter. Through it Zuckerman could see her tongue as it nervously skittered about inside her mouth. The jawbone itself was partially exposed, an inch of it as white and clean as enamel tile." Roth does not write like this anymore. He is simpler, more urgent, more vocal. In fact, in this later, plainer work Roth often makes subtle poetry by using ordinary words in unexpected ways, or by mobilizing cliché, but he slips these phrases past us conversationally, almost before we have noticed them. An old retiree in Florida, in "Sabbath's Theater," for instance, is referred to by the unassuming phrase "a suntanned little endurer with steel-gray hair," and we can see this Floridian in all his wrinkled longevity. Similarly, in "Exit Ghost" Zuckerman reflects that he cannot defeat a much younger man, a literary journalist named Richard Kliman, who is "savage with health and armed to the teeth with time." It is wonderful to take the cliché "armed to the teeth" and combine it with the abstract word "time," producing a hovering suggestion of a second cliché, this one having to do with old age, being "long in the tooth." In this novel, and in this phrase, short in the tooth meets long in the tooth.

This plain, hard style is characterized by a long, lawless, uninterruptible debater's sentence that seems to be all voice—to be pretty much off the cuff—until one notices with delight how delicately exact the syntax is. Here, in the new novel, Nathan rails against cell phones, which he is shocked to find have taken over Manhattan:

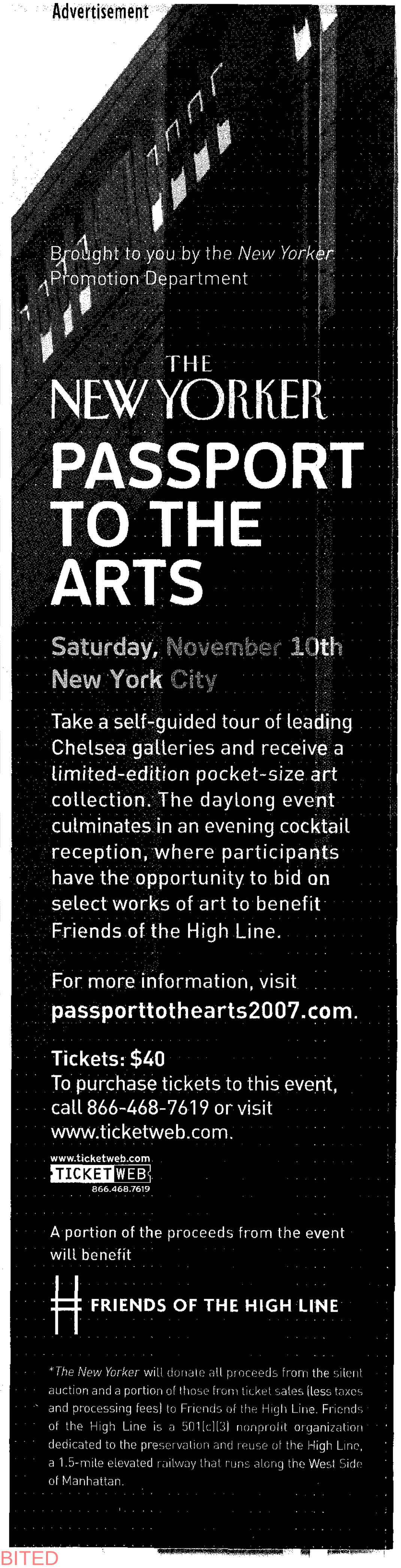
> I understood that background silence had long been abolished from restaurants, elevators, and ballparks, but that the immense loneliness of human beings should produce this boundless longing to be heard, and the accompanying disregard for being overheard—well, having lived largely in the era of the telephone booth, whose substantial folding doors could be pulled tightly shut, I was impressed by the conspicuousness of it all and found myself entertaining the idea for a story in which Manhattan has turned into a sinister collectivity where everyone is spying on everyone else, everyone being tracked by the person at the other end of his or her phone, even though, incessantly dialing one another from wherever they like in the great out of doors, the telephoners believe themselves to be experiencing the maximum freedom.

"Exit Ghost" is a kind of commentary on "the last great outburst of everything" that tempted the protagonist of "Everyman." Nathan Zuckerman, the famous novelist, has ended his rural quarantine, in order to get treatment in Manhattan for his incontinence. In the hospital, he sees Amy Bellette, a woman he last saw almost fifty years ago, when she was the dashing former student of the great short-story writer E. I. Lonoff. The young Nathan was so dazzled by the mysterious woman that he concocted a fantasy that Amy was really Anne Frank, who had somehow survived and was living pseudonymously in postwar America. (This fantasy occupies the third chapter of Roth's novel "The Ghost Writer," published in 1979, in which Zuckerman, the book's narrator, spends a night at Lonoff's home, and, having overheard Lonoff and Amy in intimate conversation, decides to imagine the narrative of Amy's life.) Amy is no longer alluring; indeed, she looks as ill as she is. She is being treated at the hospital for brain cancer. Zuckerman does not speak to her.

But the encounter perhaps dislodges the sediment of habit. For later, at dinner, Zuckerman sees an ad in *The New York Review of Books* for a proposed house swap and impulsively phones the owners. They have an apartment on West Seventy-first Street, and want to spend a year in the country. Nathan meets them; they are thirty-year-old writers named Billy Davidoff and Jamie Logan. Thus the last great outburst begins. Jamie is young, intelligent, attractive. "I hadn't sat so close to such an irresistible young woman in years. . . . She had a huge pull on me, a huge gravitational pull on the ghost of my desire." Just as the young Nathan wove a fantasy around the young Amy, so the seasoned Nathan now weaves a fantasy around Jamie, as if Jamie could ever find this housebound little endurer anything but sexually ridiculous. Nathan is alert to the danger of yielding to "the ruthlessness of a desperate infatuation guaranteed to be anything but harmless to a man bearing between his legs a spigot of wrinkled flesh where once he'd had the fully functioning sexual organ, complete with bladder sphincter control, of a robust adult male." But he yields anyway, as he must, because the "velocity of the attraction allows for no resignation and contains no resignation—there is only room for the greed of desire."

Back in his hotel room, he writes up fictitious versions of mildly flirtatious conversations with Jamie, which he lays out on the hotel notepaper in the form of a He/She dialogue, like a play, and which he mockingly calls "He and She, a play of desire and temptation and flirtation and agony." In these dialogues, Nathan works away at his erotic quarry, getting ever closer to the embarrassing admission that he is obsessed with her. Flirtation and agony: alas, the fantasy of endlessness is also the prison of endlessness, since the Hydra-headed male sexual urge refuses to die and constantly reconstitutes itself, despite the murderous attacks of the advancing body.

At the same time, Richard Kliman, the young man armed to the teeth with time, contacts Zuckerman. An athletic and bullying twenty-eight-year-old, and a former lover of Jamie's, he is writing a



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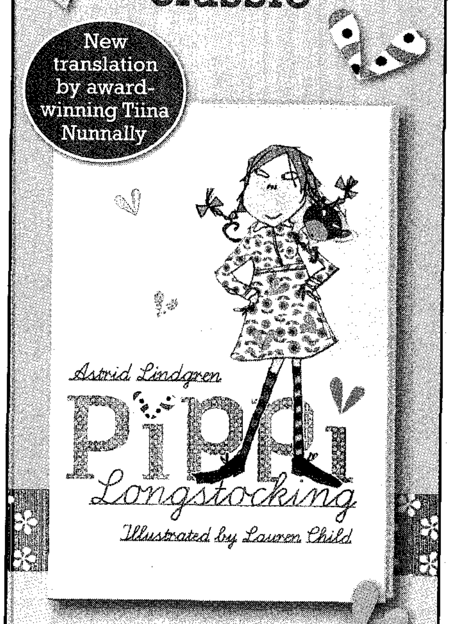
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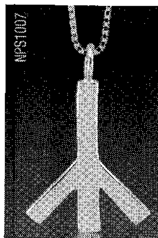

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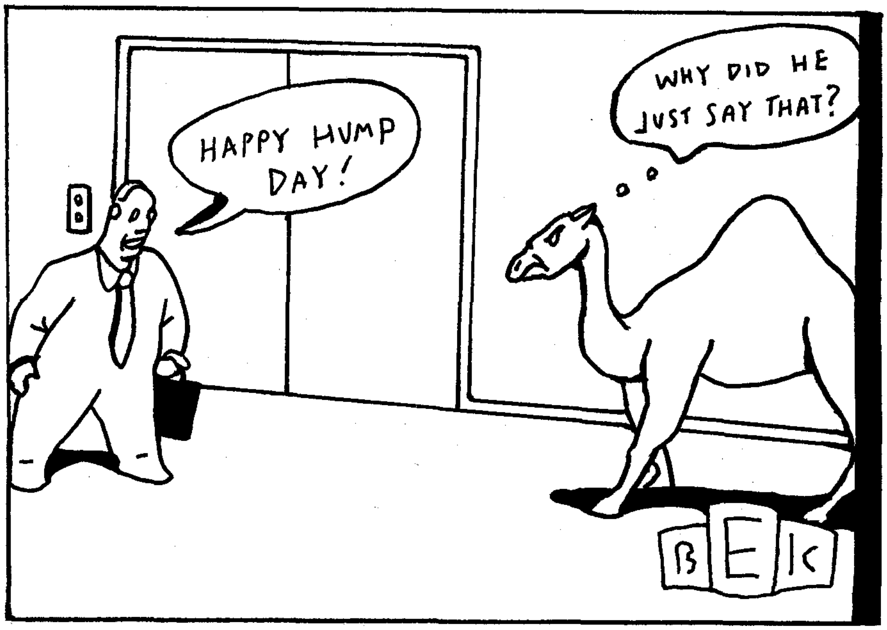
biography of E. I. Lonoff, and wants Zuckerman's help. He thinks he can explain the five-year silence at the end of Lonoff's life, when Lonoff was living with Amy Bellette. Lonoff, he claims, had an incestuous affair with his half sister, and was paralyzed by this unspeakable secret. That's why Lonoff was unable to complete the novel he was working on when he died. But that novel, says Kliman, who has read some of it, is obviously about the "great secret." Nathan is repelled by Kliman, aquiver with ambition to make his (deliberately chosen) name, and appalled that his salacious inventions may drown Lonoff's reputation. He pledges to put a stop to Kliman. "There's the not-so that reveals the so—that's fiction; and then there's the not-so that just isn't so—that's Kliman," he tells Jamie.

Suddenly, isolation in the Berkshires has given way to a "crazed hope of rejuvenation." (The novel is set during the week of the election of 2004, and the bitter madness of those days is a kind of Forest of Arden in which Nathan's antic moment can be played out.) Now Amy is pulled into the swirl, too, since Nathan must seek her out to hear her account of Lonoff's "great secret." He finds her in a grim walkup on First Avenue. Movingly, grotesquely, the dying woman who was once the object of Nathan's desire has ceded her power to the thirty-year-old Jamie, and is now good only for the sexless respect of posterity. She will have a little place in literary history as Lonoff's final partner, but there is no erotic gravitational pull on the seventy-one-year-old Nathan. Amy confirms Kliman's hunch, but Nathan rejects the fact and, more important, the premise of the fact, which is that fiction can be read confessionally. If Lonoff was writing a novel about incestuous relations, Nathan argues, then that was the fiction he was making. A fiction, not a report. "Fiction for him was never representation," he tells Amy. "It was rumination in narrative form. He thought, I'll make this my reality."

The danger in Roth's work has always been a slightly sentimental didacticism; an example is the coercive way he has leaned on the word "human" in the past few years—one of those words which always answer their own questions. In Roth's world, to be human is to have the "human stain," is to get things wrong, to get people wrong, to make mistakes, to have a sexual body, to be messy and vital and, above all, male. Roth has sometimes resembled a man standing on a corner wearing a huge sandwich board bearing the words, in irritatingly hectoring capitals, "WE ARE ONLY HUMAN"; "Everyman," a book both deeply moving and somewhat self-pitying, seemed to switch the board for one with the message "WE ARE DYING." His new novel is a better novel than "Everyman," intricate, artful, and pressing, and avoids sentimentality with the comedy that the latter novel lacked. Nathan is rueful and amusing in his at-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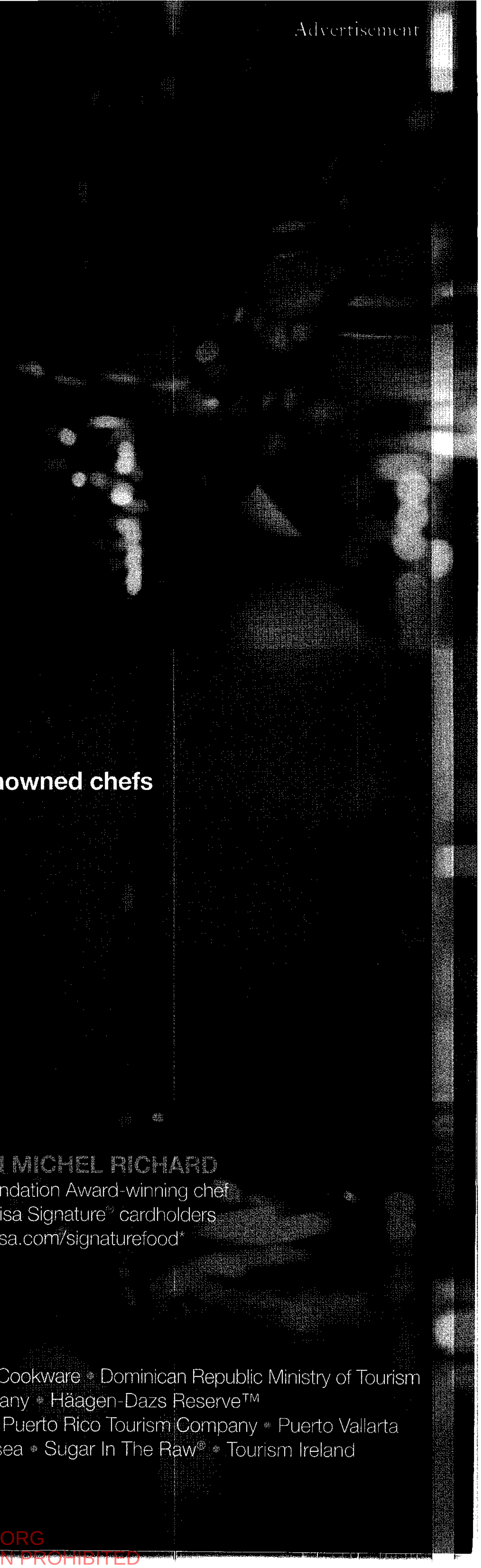

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REVLON

tempts to seduce Jamie; after all, he has nothing to offer her save "a spigot of wrinkled flesh."

But the literary intricacy of this novel is what gives it its deep-shelved complexity and makes it a lovely essay on the fiction-writing impulse. Nathan says of Richard Strauss's "Four Last Songs," which is playing in Billy and Jamie's apartment, that "the composer drops all masks and, at the age of eighty-two, stands before you naked. And you dissolve." This novel, so engaged with questions of aging and nakedness, invites a comparison. There is something like a confessional urge at work here, as there was in "Everyman," and the reference to Strauss is one of several explicit allusions to late work and dying artists (Eliot's "Little Gidding," George Plimpton's sudden death, Keats's last letter). But, at the same time, far from dropping masks, Roth is donning them as fast as you can say Cervantes, or Kierkegaard, or Nabokov. First, the novel is narrated not by Roth but by his literary alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, who has narrated eight earlier novels by Roth. Second, "Exit Ghost" is conducting an intertextual conversation with "The Ghost Writer," and both novels concern not one but two invented writers (Zuckerman and E. I. Lonoff). The vertiginous nature of this kind of false mimesis is apparent when the reviewer is forced to write that Nathan once "knew" the dashing Amy Bellette, but can ground her only in the eroding sand of another novel. Third, "Exit Ghost" breaks four times into self-consciously "invented" scenes—the fantasies that Zuckerman writes in his hotel room. These "He and She" dialogues, between Nathan and Jamie, are longer than the "actual" scenes that the novel stages between the two; and, further, Nathan tells us that after talking to Amy he went back to his hotel to write up his "recollections of my evening with Amy." So even the "actual" scenes merge with the "invented" ones: they all go onto the same hotel stationery.

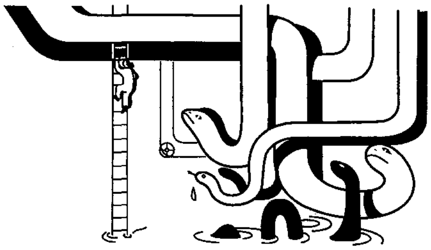
Roth has been the great stealth postmodernist of American letters, able to have his cake and eat it without any evidence of crumbs. This is because he does not regard himself as a postmodernist. He is intensely interested in fabrication, in the performance of the self, in the reality that we make up in order to live; but his fiction examines this "without sacrificing the factuality of time and place to surreal fakery or magic-realist gimmickry," as Zuckerman approvingly says of Lonoff's work. Roth does not want to use his games to remind us, tediously and self-consciously, that Nathan and Amy and Lonoff are just "invented characters." Quite the opposite. Unstartled by their inventedness, he swims through depthless skepticism toward a series of questions that are gravely metaphysical, and more Jamesian than Pynchonian: How much of any self is pure invention? Isn't such invention as real to us as reality? But then how much reality can we bear? Roth knows that this kind of inquiry, far from robbing his fiction of reality, provokes an intense desire in his readers to invest his invented characters with solid reality, just as Nathan once invested the opaque Amy Bellette with the reality of Anne Frank. In this kind of work, the reader and the writer do something similar—they are both creating real fictions.

Fiction, for Roth, is not what Plato thought mimesis was: an imitation of an imitation. Fiction is a rival life, a "counterlife," to use the title of one of Roth's greatest novels, and this is why his work has managed so brilliantly the paradox of being at once playfully artful and seriously real. In "The Ghost Writer," Nathan Zuckerman, the young writer, laments, "If only I could invent as presumptuously as real life!" So he sets out to answer his own challenge, and conjures an outrageous invented life for Amy Bellette, in which she becomes the survivor Anne Frank. In "Exit Ghost," Zuckerman bewails his sexual impotence: "Why must strength's abatement be so quick and cruel? Oh, to wish what is into what is not, other than on the page!" In the earlier novel, fiction yearns to keep pace with the scandal and presumptuousness and fictionality of life; in the later novel, life yearns for the scandalous freedom and fantasy of fiction. But for Roth there is no contradiction between the two positions. In both cases, the urge to create fiction—the urge to wish what is into what is not—is really just the urge to live more, to extend life, to bring back life, as Zuckerman yearns for the rejuvenation of his body. And both the urge to create fiction and the urge to extend life belong to the magical fantasy of endlessness. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

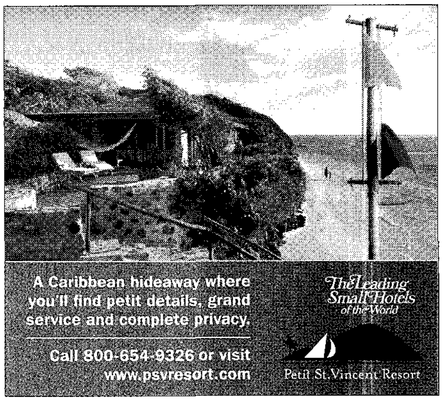
The Almost Moon, *by Alice Sebold (Little, Brown; $24.99).* Sebold's first book was a memoir of rape, her second, "The Lovely Bones," a prodigiously successful novel about a murdered child, and her new novel kicks off in a similar vein: "When all is said and done, killing my mother came easily." Helen Knightly, the depressed and confused narrator, is a divorced woman with two grown children. She has spent the past twenty years feeding her agoraphobic mother with "long pink spoons pilfered from Baskin-Robbins" and daydreaming about making this frail, elderly body magically disappear. In the course of twenty-four feverish hours, after suffocating her mother and depositing the body in an old meat freezer in the basement, she recaps the hellish landscape of domestic turmoil and mental illness that is her family history. Sebold's fixation on terror retains its hold, though sometimes the sheer profusion of dysfunction feels improvised and the more macabre touches effortful.

Samedi the Deafness, *by Jesse Ball (Vintage; $12.95).* Ball, a poet, was once a croupier, and elements of both professions are evident in his début novel, which combines the measured culling of language with the headlong propulsion of chance. Nominally a thriller, the book begins with the discovery of a dying man in a park, who claims that his stabbing is linked to a terrorist conspiracy, and it leads to a labyrinthine country manse retrofitted as a "verisylum" for chronic liars whose fictions are so extreme that they wind up "compromising the identity of the individual." Chapters are brief, dialogue oblique, but even dimly glimpsed characters are invested with genuine feeling. The hero's struggle to decipher the rules of the sanitarium is rendered in a series of exquisite set pieces, each one a clue in a puzzle whose solution is ultimately immaterial to its beauty.



The Terror Dream, *by Susan Faludi (Metropolitan; $26).* Faludi's third book provides an unexpected but incisive assessment of the post-September 11th era, through the lens of gender relations. Sifting rhetoric and symbolism in the media, Faludi concludes that "women's independence had become implicated in our nation's failure to protect itself." Americans, she argues, reflexively sought comfort in "fables of female peril" and of rescue at the hands of macho vigilantes, while feminist views were dismissed as unpatriotic. A historical section on pilgrims, pioneers, and Indians, intended to show the "mythic underpinnings" of American insecurity, seems overplayed, but Faludi remains a keen observer of the present. Her thesis may arouse skepticism, but she marshals provocative evidence, documenting such phenomena as a decline of women's bylines in national newspapers and a forty-per-cent drop in federal sex-discrimination prosecutions.

Diamonds, Gold, and War, *by Martin Meredith (PublicAffairs; $35).* In 1879, Viscount Wolseley, a British general sent to what later became South Africa, wrote, "These Transvaal Boers are the only white race I know of that has been steadily going back towards barbarism." But, in the decades after the discovery of diamonds in the region, neither the British nor the Boers had a monopoly on barbarism—what with the racial millenarianism of Paul Kruger, the mercenary imperialism of Cecil Rhodes, and the venality of officials in London attracted, Meredith writes in this astute history, by the idea of "empire-building on the cheap." African tribes were merely given a choice of who would rob them. Meredith expertly shows how the exigencies of the diamond (and then gold) rush laid the foundation for apartheid. The sheer number of betrayals and deals made in bad faith is, at times, dizzying; rarely have terms like "nationhood" and "justice" been put to such nefarious use.



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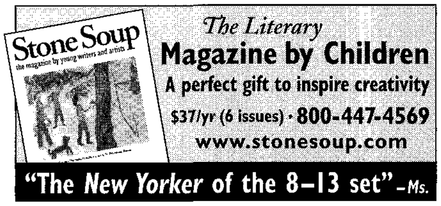

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BOOKS

UPSTATE

Small-town dreamers.

BY LOUIS MENAND

"My natural inclination," says the narrator on the first page of Richard Russo's "Bridge of Sighs" (Knopf; $26.95), is "inertia rationalized." His name is Lou Lynch, and he is working on a memoir, which constitutes much of the novel we will be reading, and which, he says, might deserve the title "The Dullest Story Ever Told." Not the most auspicious way to begin a five-hundred-page book. And Lynch is, truthfully, a pretty dull guy. He operates a commercial mini-empire consisting of three convenience stores (a chief source of profit is the sale of Lotto tickets), a video rental, and a seasonal ice-cream shop in one of those towns in the land that time forgot, upstate New York. This one is called Thomaston, and it is situated in a fictional spot north of Albany, near Lake George—the kind of place where people think of moving to Schenectady as making it.

It's a tiny anthill. But the ant's a centaur in his dragon world (as Pound put it), and dramatic intensity is proportional to its setting. A boy may be falling out of the sky, but whether there is enough macaroni salad at the deli counter is a problem a thousand times more consequential to those who make their living running deli counters. Russo is committed to inventing this sort of problem, the macaroni-salad problem, and then taking it seriously. He is a sentimental, humorous, ruminative, occasionally satirical, and extremely unhurried writer. "Wry" is a word that people have applied to his style, and it is a just and proper word.

The biggest small-town novel of all is Grace Metalious's "Peyton Place," which appeared in 1956, a publishing blockbuster that featured rape, incest, and suicide (also, a castle built by a renegade escaped slave) in a northern New England town. Russo is a far gentler writer: there are a number of surprisingly bloody fistfights in "Bridge of Sighs," but the characters' sexual secrets are relatively ordinary. Ordinariness is the point. Russo is much more interested in what happens when a new A. & P. comes to town—it puts the milkman out of work and the corner grocery store out of business—than in imagining a lurid underside to the lives of people who are preoccupied mainly with finding new ways to keep their heads above water. He is a novelistic chronicler of the postwar metamorphosis of places like Thomaston—or like Empire Falls, the Maine town in his last novel, which was published in 2001—from self-sufficient centers of minor industry into faceless, interchangeable nodes in the giant exurban sprawl. Still, though the sexual secrets aren't terribly scandalous, there are a lot of them in the novel. It is, in its anti-sensational way, a high-quality soap opera about the loves and rivalries of a few local families over two generations, and the soapy stuff is what pulls the reader along.

Richard Russo

RICCARDO VECCHIO

The Bridge of Sighs is not, of course, near Lake George. It's in Venice, and though a small part of the action does take place there, it's nothing that might not have been set in Paris or Rome. Placing a few characters in Venice seems mainly an excuse to appropriate the phrase "bridge of sighs" and endow it with a symbolic significance that is a little nebulous but seems to have something to do with the notion of an alternative life. The persistent anxiety of the characters is that they will end up exactly like their parents—that growing up in an insular place like Thomaston will leave them no chance to develop, or even to imagine, a different kind of life, or a different mode of being.

In the case of the narrator, his anxiety is that he doesn't really feel this anxiety: he wants to be just like his father, also Lou Lynch, a farm boy who became a milkman and, when that business failed, the owner of a small corner store that had once been a bookie joint. Big Lou Lynch is an irritating optimist—in the view of some of the less charitable characters, a doofus, a man who dismisses fears that the local tannery will close, because it has polluted the town's river with cancer-causing chemicals, on the ground that if it does people will have nowhere to work. (He dies, of course, of cancer.) His son can't quite rise to this degree of mindless boosterism, but he wishes that he could, for he has a hard time seeing anything wrong with it. And what is wrong with loving the life, whatever it is, that history has unloaded on you? Why invest time and psychic assets dreaming that things could be different?

The story in "Bridge of Sighs" turns on a triangle. One corner is the narrator, the second is his wife, Sarah, and the third is their friend Bobby, the oldest of the many sons of an abusive postman and his miserable wife. Lynch and Sarah are both in love with Bobby (there are some hints that Lynch is homosexual), because Bobby is the only person in their world who manages to break away completely from Thomaston. When he turns eighteen, he changes his name, beats up his father, flees to Canada and then to Venice, and becomes a famous painter. Bobby wishes to have nothing to do with Thomaston or with the Lynches—he doesn't answer their letters to him in Venice. But, as the story unwinds, he begins to get pulled back into their lives.

Russo is a conventional writer, but the template for this story is from an experimental work, Joyce's "Ulysses." Lynch is the small-town entrepreneur, canny and naïve in equal parts, a plodder and a dreamer; Sarah is the clever and worldly wife to whom he is blindly devoted; Bobby is the angry boy who flies by the nets, going into exile and becoming an artist. The author drops a few hints: he adapts, without attribution, a line from Joyce's novel (we are always "moving through space, yes, but also through time, meeting ourselves"), and Lynch, just like Leopold Bloom, has lost a child.

Joyce's anthill was Dublin, a place that his characters refused to acknowledge to themselves was on the outer fringes of European civilization, a city surviving on memory, blarney, and drink. Russo is not so dour. (Few writers are so dour about anything as Joyce was about Dublin.) He thinks that Thomaston is on the fringe only in the sense that most places in America where people like the Lynches and their friends live are on the fringe, blowing wherever the national economic spirit listeth. In the end, his sympathies are with the accepters, the conformers, those who stay put and make the most of things, the Lynches and the Blooms. The boy who flies by the nets will eventually fall out of the sky, but macaroni salad is a problem forever.

Russo's handling of character is various. He can be mocking and cartoonish, but he can also be intuitive and empathic. His treatment of the two Lou Lynches and their witty wives is nuanced. Bobby, on the other hand, is more unappealing than one suspects he was intended to be. There are some instances of overdrawing, particularly in the case of two of the book's African-American characters, who are obliged to speak a very hokey black-folk-speak. The phlegmatic and somewhat dimwitted narrator turns out to be a useful device: Lynch sees things merely as they are so that the reader can feel the satisfaction of seeing through them. One might expect such a narrator to be disabused of his superficial understanding in a violent and disturbing way, for the cover to be ripped off and Thomaston to be revealed as a Peyton Place. But that is not Russo's style. His drama is modestly scaled, but his anthill is convincingly alive with ants. ♦

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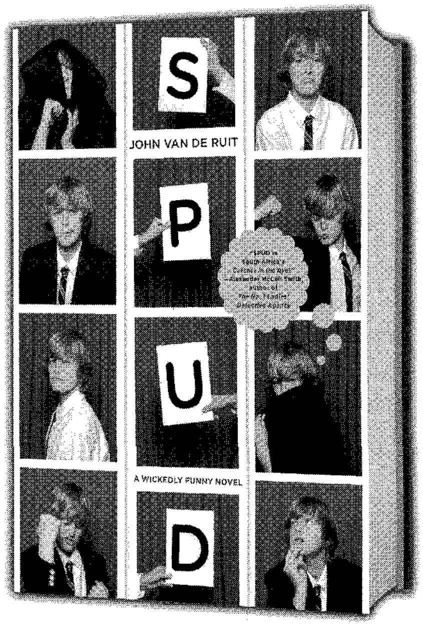

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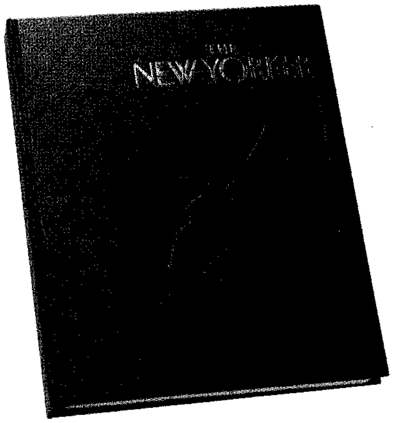

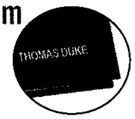

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PAY AND PLAY

Theresa Rebeck and Horton Foote on the perils of ownership.

BY JOHN LAHR

Theresa Rebeck is a slick playwright; in fact, she's so slick that Gucci wears *her* shoes. Her scenes have a crisp shape, her dialogue pops, her characters swagger through an array of showy emotion, and she knows how to give a plot a cunning twist. Rebeck's latest play, "Mauritius" (directed by Doug Hughes, at the Biltmore), brings together two sensational forms of combat: the psychological battle between rivalrous siblings for property after a parent's death, which most of the audience understands, and the compulsive battle for ownership in the world of philately, which most of the audience doesn't. (The title of the play refers to "the holy grail of philately," a couple of uncancelled, misprinted African stamps.) When the play opens, Jackie (the excellent Alison Pill) is in possession of a stamp collection that her late mother gave her as a reward for her loyal care during a long struggle with cancer. Jackie is ignorant about stamps, but she's smart enough to know that life has dealt her a low hand and she wants to sell the stamps in order to better her own existence. All that stands between Jackie and a very big payday, we soon learn, is the question of whether or not the stamps are real. But what eventually becomes clear, in the course of this crowd-pleasing evening, is that the only fake here is the play.

Alison Pill and Katie Finneran as battling siblings in "Mauritius."

"Mauritius" is, in essence, David Mamet for girls. In Mamet's "American Buffalo," a group of bumblers contrive to steal a rare nickel from a man who paid ninety dollars for it at a junk shop. With their idiom—a combination of ignorance and extravagance that emulates the badinage of big business—the lowlifes become a satire on the spiritual attrition of capitalism. "You know what is free enterprise," one of them says. "The freedom . . . of the Individual . . . to Embark on any Fucking Course that he sees fit . . . in order to secure his honest chance to make a profit." In "Mauritius," Rebeck channels Mamet's rhythms and his comic tropes of linguistic self-inflation. Dennis (Bobby Cannavale), the amateur collector who first spots the stamps in Jackie's collection, tries to leverage his discovery with a wealthy collector, the tritely named Sterling (F. Murray Abraham). "Fuck you, you little piece of shit," the barbarous Sterling replies to Dennis, who contends that a valise of Sterling's cash will be sufficient to bilk Jackie out of her stamps, which have an estimated value of six million dollars. "You bring me this fucking preposterous story about some girl with a— Fuck you. *Fuck you.* Life is short, my friend, and it's getting shorter, you bring stories like this to the table." He goes on, "You ask yourself what do you want out of life? I advise you. At moments like this, you are stepping out over the abyss, for what?" When Sterling appears later, lugging an aluminum case bursting with spondulics, he weaves another web of Mamet-like flimflammery: "It is cash, it is under the table, there's no overhead, there's no lawyers, there's no fucking accountants here, to drive you and me fucking crazy with their nonsense. That's added value."

Rebeck mines a lot of amusement out of the permutations of the business deal. When Dennis finally gets all the parties around the table, the pragmatic Jackie demands cash just to show Sterling the stamps. Sterling balks. Dennis prevails upon him to ante up. "When the river stops flowing, all the fish die," he says. But, where Mamet's play was an act of penetration, Rebeck's is an act of prestidigitation, a confidence trick. In this ersatz but entertaining sleight of hand, it's the audience that gets robbed—of the revelations of character and of feeling that a play should provide.

From its first beat, "Mauritius" seems to me psychologically bogus. Clutching

ROBERT RISKO

the album, Jackie stands just inside the threshold of a stamp shop, trying and failing to get the attention of the persnickety owner, Philip (the deft Dylan Baker), who sits reading a book about twenty feet away. She launches into an expository monologue that lasts more than a minute. Reader, when was the last time you spoke to someone at length across an empty room without making eye contact? Jackie may be fragile and lost but she's not insane. The moment looks dramatic, but as staged it's untrue. So, too, is the rift between Jackie and her better-educated, older half sister, Mary (Katie Finneran), who claims the stamp collection as part of her emotional inheritance. Their mother has left no will, so it comes down to Mary's sentimental claim and Jackie's pragmatic one. Jackie sees the stamps as payment for the servitude of her youth, for the sacrifice that she made, and that Mary wouldn't or couldn't make. "She asked you to come, she begged you, and you stayed away. That was your choice," Jackie says, with justifiable bitterness. But what was the issue between Mary and her mother? How was the mother difficult? Why has Mary apparently had so many more advantages in life than Jackie? Who *are* these people? The question extends to the secondary characters as well. What is the source of Sterling's almost Jacobean greed? Of his wealth? Why does Philip hold a grudge against Sterling? Rebeck gives her characters arresting behavior without exploring it. Personality, in other words, is conferred in the service of plot, not truth. For all its shiny surface, "Mauritius" follows the old boulevard recipe of complication without depth.

It says something about the appeal of Alison Pill—an actress with a big future—that her compelling combination of ferocity and fragility carries the audience beyond the inconsistencies of the story. Toward the end of the play, Jackie seems to capitulate to Mary. "I just wanted something, for once, just something," she says, like a tire deflating, handing over the stamp album. She adds, "You couldn't let me have anything? Not anything?" Jackie has thrown a knockout punch, stood up to con men, survived strangulation, and now, at the eleventh hour, appears to cave to a sister she claims to hate. The happy reversal of fortune that follows may make commercial sense but it makes no emotional sense. As Mamet might say, "Don't piss on my shoes and tell me it's raining."

Where Rebeck's tale of a troubled legacy leaves nothing to the imagination, Horton Foote allows the family dispute at the center of his new play, "Dividing the Estate" (fluently directed by Michael Wilson, at 59E59), to unfold calmly in a fully thought-out, emotionally consistent, and compassionate universe. In the parlous economic climate of Texas in the late nineteen-eighties, amid failing banks and falling oil prices, the Gordon family is land rich and cash poor. The imperious family matriarch, Stella (the pitch-perfect Elizabeth Ashley), staunchly refuses to split up the property. "I'm never in this world going to divide it," she growls in response to pressure from her daughter Mary Jo (the expert Hallie Foote, the playwright's daughter), who wants her inheritance now. Greed contends with family loyalty, and, in this financial pinch, self-interest is rationalized as tax savings. In his portrayal of the desperation of the affluent unmoored by seismic economic and cultural shifts, the ninety-one-year-old playwright—whose dramatic expertise has earned him a Pulitzer Prize and two Academy Awards ("To Kill a Mockingbird," "Tender Mercies")—has the confidence to trust his characters and the wisdom to follow them. He lets their pathos build by slow degrees. When the trembling, aged retainer Doug (Arthur French) insists on serving dinner to the fractious family and then spills the biscuits, the moment plays like tragedy.

"Dividing the Estate" brings news of the manners and mores of the Southwest. Foote can nail the reality of place with a simple detail: paper flowers in a mason jar at a black cemetery. He captures in the Southern twang both the music and the mendacity of personality. Mary Jo's nasal, high-pitched fussing and fuming undermine her patina of politeness. Angling for every advantage, Mary Jo, as Hallie Foote plays her, is a wry star turn, at once ugly and hilarious. After Stella dies and Mary Jo's hopes of a windfall collapse, she offers up what Dr. Johnson called "the secret ambush of a specious prayer." "I know what I'm praying for, every night down on my knees," she says. "That we strike oil." ♦

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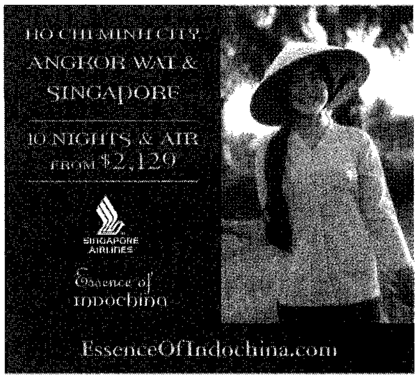

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LEAVING IT ALL BEHIND

"The Darjeeling Limited" and "Control."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Adrien Brody, Owen Wilson, Jason Schwartzman, and Wes Anderson on the set.

SYLVIA PLACHY

Can you have a thriving movie culture in a country without enough trains? The decline of the American railroad neatly parallels that of the Hollywood studio system, and something about the train traveller and the moviegoer catches the eye: both are required to sit with their fellow-men, and to start their journey at a particular time, not of their own choosing. Both are left alone, yet their privacy—tinged with dreaminess—is of a very public kind. Set a movie *on* a train and you get the best of both worlds, for your audience will feel an instant kinship with the souls packed together onscreen. Preston Sturges knew this, as did the Billy Wilder of "Some Like It Hot"; these days, however, the thrill of the ride has shrivelled to a dull metropolitan commute.

So, if you are a movie director with a taste for the railroad but the misfortune to be living now, where do you turn? If you are Wes Anderson, you go to India. He could have picked Japan, I suppose, but his characters have to hop onto a rear carriage, like robbers in a Western, and you can't really do that with a bullet train. In the opening scene of his new film, "The Darjeeling Limited," we see an unnamed businessman in a porkpie hat (Bill Murray) rushing for an Indian train, and failing to catch it, while a younger man running beside him, Peter Whitman (Adrien Brody), just makes it. Time slows as he sprints, until we see the whites of his socks, and the soundtrack urges him on. If such daft awkwardness can be turned into a hiatus of grace, Anderson is asking, what other revelations might it portend?

There are more slow motions to come, gradually draining the haste and stress out of the characters, as if to prove that the quick are really the dead. Once on board, Peter finds his two brothers, Jack (Jason Schwartzman) and Francis (Owen Wilson), waiting for him; they have all joined up to refresh their brotherhood after the death of their father. This is easier said than done, for the trio is primed for discord. Peter is unhappily married, and he seems to have pilfered some of his father's belongings; Jack is a morose Lothario, his pursuits affording only the barest pleasure; and Francis, his head still bandaged after a motorcycle crash, is the organizer of the trip, who insists on ordering food for his siblings as if they were his kids. The dialogue bristles with ill-concealed secrets: "Don't tell him I told you." "He doesn't want you to know."

Anderson's fixation on families, like that of Henry James on the quandary of expatriates, will, I guess, never end. What makes the family inexhaustible, to the dramatic imagination, is that what may perplex and pain its members is likely to register as comic folly in the eye of the beholder. The Whitman boys are in a bad way, and there are times, as the camera swipes back and forth between them, rather than pausing to cut from one to the next, when they seem indissoluble in their unease. Yet the mood of the film is blithe, and its coloration peacock-bright. Occasionally, the brothers descend from the carriage, either to see the sights or because the ferocious steward (Waris Ahluwalia) has kicked them off for infantile behavior. During one such diversion, they rescue two country boys from drowning. Another boy dies, however ("I couldn't save mine," a stricken Peter says), and they are asked to stay and attend his funeral, yet even the mourning mood is startled and lifted by the aquamarine blue on the village walls.

Is this itself a diversion, as Anderson's detractors would claim: a cheap doodle, masking the director's inability to sustain a strong emotion? Or could it be that his greens and blues, like his other trademarks (the head-on shots of people bunched together, the bursts of song, the desires so acute that they beg to be deflected into gags), are the shadings of an ironist, who knows how easily movies can slide into the maudlin? "The Darjeeling Limited" works best when the level of artifice is at its highest and most overt—during a wondrous late tracking shot, for example, not through the brothers' train but through an idealized, heavenly row of compartments, in which Bill Murray, who missed his chance in the beginning, is restored to a comfortable niche. The movie both mocks and fulfills the Whitmans' plans for a spiritual quest. After all, they are little more than tourists, and many of their yearnings come to naught, yet Peter's face, as he leaves the drowned boy's village, bears a look of acceptance that was unimaginable at the start. The film deserves a subtitle: "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the East."

There is a moment in Anton Corbijn's "Control" when the hero, Ian Curtis (Sam Riley), who has suffered his first epileptic fit, goes to seek advice. The doctor suggests "combinations of drugs," and adds, "You should also be getting plenty of early nights and steering away from alcohol." Just one problem, Doc: this man is a *rock star*. It's like telling your dog to go easy on the bones.

Curtis was the lead singer in Joy Division, the British band that rose to prominence, with its unsmiling hymns to dislocation and loss, in the late nineteen-seventies and came to an unnatural end when Curtis hanged himself, in 1980, at the age of twenty-three. Given all that, we could be forgiven for expecting the worst from Corbijn's film. Good grief, it's even shot in black-and-white: what more could the miserabilists want? Yet "Control" has an unmistakable pulse: a wiry, electric tension between the extraordinary spectacle of Curtis at maximum surge—clinging to the microphone for dear life, or stepping away from it and swinging his arms in a frantic march to nowhere—and the dented ordinariness of which his undear life, like ours, was mostly composed.

Curtis came from Macclesfield, in the Northwest of England. Early on, we see him as a dreamy schoolboy, posing shirtless in front of the bedroom mirror, mouthing along to Bowie's "Jean Genie." In this respect, he was no different from a million other youths. When he says, of his home town, "I've wanted to escape it my whole life," the wish is as well worn as the place itself, and there is something both agonizing and typical in the knowledge that he died on the eve of true escape—the band was on the verge of leaving for its first American tour. "I've got my clothes all laid out on the bed and everything," the guitarist, Bernard Sumner (James Anthony Pearson), says over the phone to Curtis. He sounds like a ten-year-old going off to camp.

Curtis married a local girl, Deborah (Samantha Morton), when both were teen-agers. She had absolutely no wish to flee their existence, and much of the movie's sorrow springs from Morton's amazing ability to invest comfort and companionship—the easy-listening emotions, as it were, not the rock-and-roll ones—with a dignity and a music of their own. Hence her despair when he falls for somebody else, a Belgian admirer named Annik (Alexandra Maria Lara). Because Morton is so convincing, and because the film refuses to scoff at her homely virtues, you feel torn by Curtis's betrayal. Step back a second, however, and you think, This guy slept with just one groupie? Shouldn't he get a medal for restraint?

If that balance of our loyalties is maintained throughout, it's because "Control" has a beautiful poise of its own. This is Corbijn's first film; he made his name as a still photographer, and took pictures of Joy Division in 1979. The monochrome of the movie could be construed as a nod to the songs, some of which do more with a monotone—Curtis weaving his momentous moan around a single note—than you would believe possible. Thanks to the soft shine of the black-and-white images, we come to know, with a peculiar fondness, the singer's house on the corner of a Macclesfield street, and the regular sight of him returning there like a soldier with his duffelbag. For sheer lustre, though, nothing can match the first shot of Annik, dancing dark-eyed at a Joy Division concert; one look at her and you can predict the trouble to come.

Everything that is good about "Control" is nailed in one sequence. Curtis walks along the street, the thud of the soundtrack keeping pace with his tread. The camera moves around to view him from behind, and we see the word "HATE" daubed on the back of his jacket. All his rebellion is there, but somehow the scene zings with more sprightliness than gloom, and there is still a twist to come. As he heads toward the local Employment Exchange, we presume that, as an artist and a hater, he must be on the dole, but no: he works there, in a shirt and tie, finding jobs for other people. Those who worship Joy Division may bridle at Corbijn's film for its reluctance to mythologize their hero. Speaking as someone so irretrievably square that I not only never listened to the band but didn't even know anyone who liked it, I can't imagine a tribute more fitting than this. "He's quite famous now, isn't he?" someone asks Deborah at a party. "Not to me," she replies. "I still wash his underpants." ♦

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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Mick Stevens, must be received by Sunday, October 14th. Finalists in the October 1st contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 29th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

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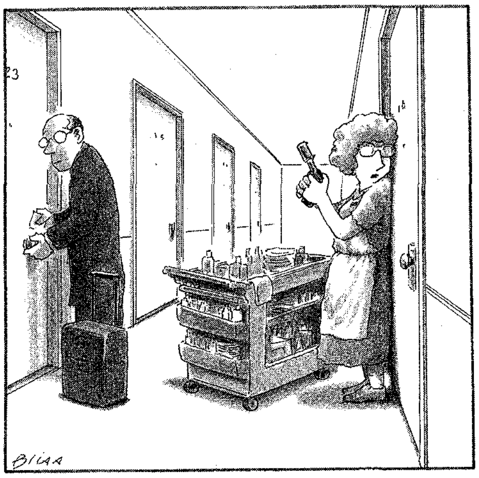
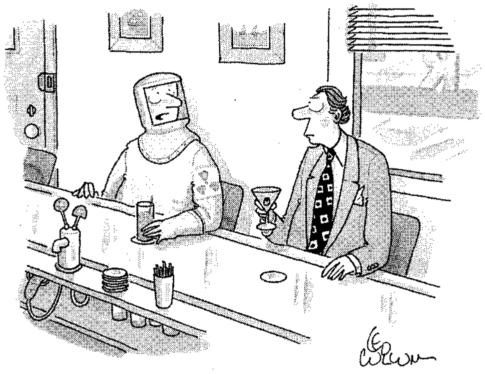


"Oh, now you want to talk, when all week it was 'Do Not Disturb.'"
Diane Ferraro, Brooklyn, N.Y.



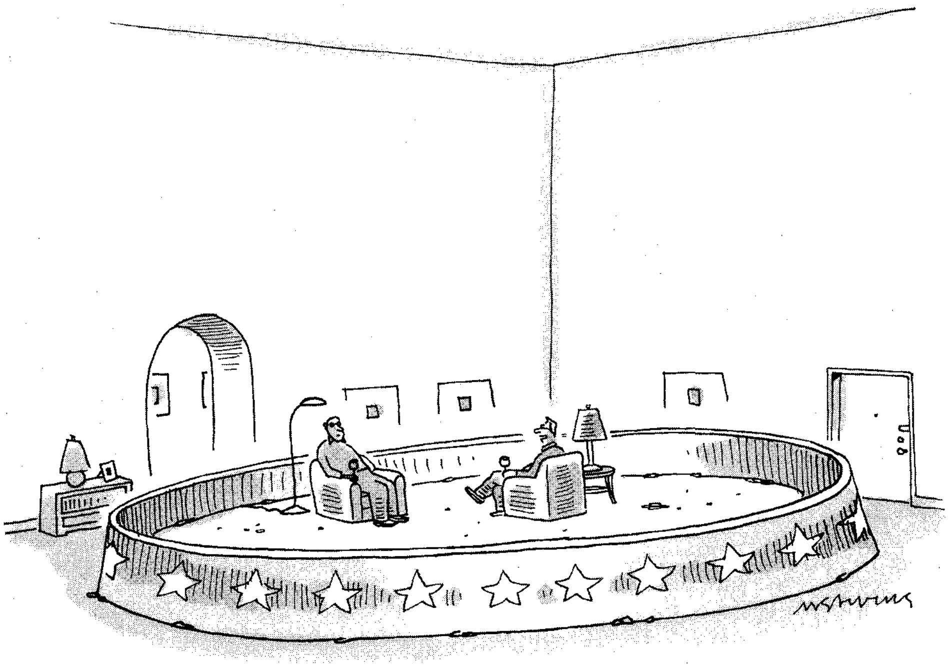
THE FINALISTS

"Ever have the feeling you forgot to turn something off?"
Preston Thomas, Chicago, Ill.

"The way I see it, I'm the miner and you're the canary."
Melissa Muntyan, Tampa, Fla.

"Trust me, background radiation—it's the new secondhand smoke."
James Gamble III, New York City

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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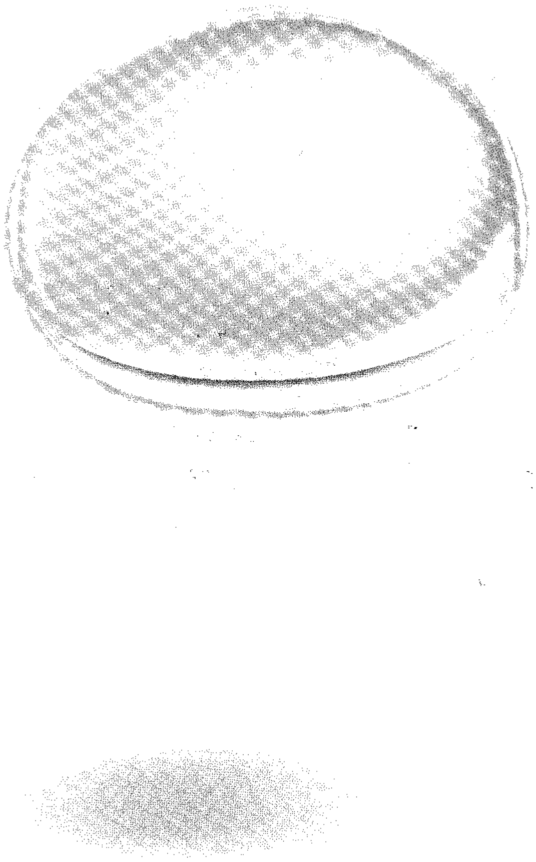

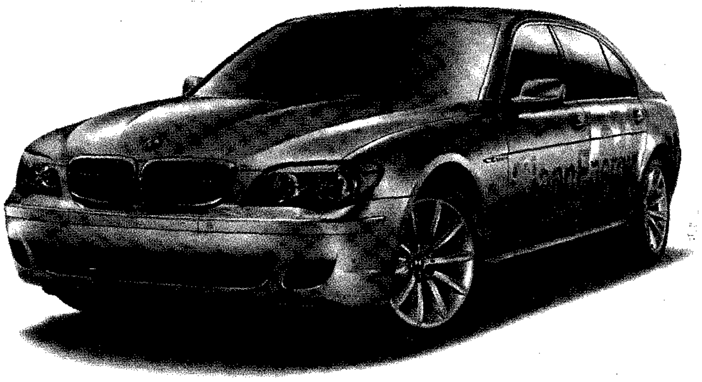

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